

Cautionary Tales

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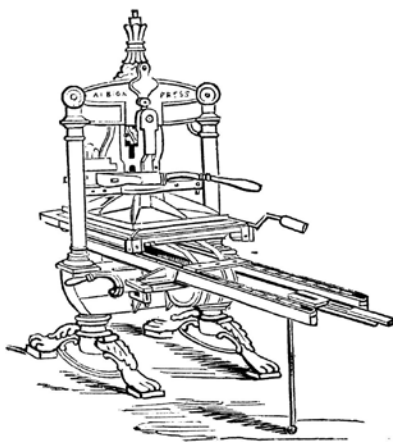
Sundry Ballads

Nathaniel S. Rounds

Cautionary Tales
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& Sundry Ballads
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See title on Cover

We poets are (upon a poet's word)
Of all mankind the creatures most absurd:
The season when to come, and when to go,
To sing, or cease to sing, we never know.

--Alexander Pope, 1688-1744

Ode on Solitude

Window to Let*

In the red-knit furrow of the dawn,
 When the marble blocks of black remain unlit,
 The street looks up with careful eye,
 And the Turkish beggar
 Walks his way.

2.

The ghost-bell gives its morning chime
 As I walk within the shop.
 I read the artist magazines.
 It's six o'clock.
 It's six o'clock.

3.

The watcher from the counter
 Sits back in horsehair broodings.
 A camel burns near Tigris eyes
 Though I've sinned no major sin.
 I purchase those I come to like.

* Published in *Scrivener*

It Didn't Hurt*

A.

Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. Father and Mickey cut the earth long. It didn't hurt. Father kept Mickey on straps and strings. Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. The earth turned red. It didn't hurt. Father's arms turned brown like toast. Their balloons swelled. Mickey whinnied. Father's face passed water. Father and Mickey cut the earth with a knife. They were twigs and sticks, moving, cutting. They were twigs and sticks on a long red pan.

Mother had a long red pan. Her white dress swelled. White dress swelled, poured out, swelled. Mother had a long red pan. There were things to eat. Mickey whinnied. Father ate. Posts and strings and posts and strings. Strings between the posts along the red pan's edge. I couldn't touch the twigs and sticks. Mickey whinnied. There were posts and strings.

B.

*Yellow pinks of mustard,
Sand and yarrow hawk bit,
Grass and candle butter cups
The white puffs puff.*

Please don't let the Mr. Bumble bite. Please keep the green arms close. Please keep the green arms the yellow waxes smile. Please keep the kisses the white fuzz kisses please keep the whispers and green arms close. Don't let the blue warm song and dances go away. Don't let Mr. Bumble say hello. Don't let him bite. Keep please keep Wicket the dog and me four fingers safe. Safe warm and safe. Safe soft, whisper us safe. Whisper us safe warm soft and whispered safe. Please keep safe.

C.

Everything starts with a please. Sister Pleases starts with a please. Sister Pleases rode the bicycle with Mr. Visits. Mr. Visits had our attic in the summertime. Sister Pleases rode the bicycle with Mr. Visits and screamed. Sister Pleases was carried on the crossbar. Mr. Visits pedaled and laughed, pedaled and laughed. Sister Pleases was carried on the crossbar. She screamed.

The front yard had green green grass. Aspens had silver leaves.

Mr. Visits pedaled and laughed and stopped. Mother took Sister Pleases off the crossbar. Sister Pleases had wet coats and slips. Wet coats and yellowed slips.

* Published in *Pottersfield Portfolio*

D.

The nighttime came and the June bugs came to visit. They saw the red lamp.

On the table near the door with screeches the red lamp glowed. The June bugs came to visit. Sister Pleases screamed. Mama, dim the red lamp, said Sister Pleases. Dim the red lamp. Mama, dim the red lamp. The June bugs came to visit. Sister Pleases screamed. Mama, dim the red lamp. Dim the red lamp, Mama, dim the red lamp.

Sister Pleases, don't scream. No screams for Sister Pleases. I drew the ceiling with sky and made the lamp a silver cloud. Wicket says no screams. No screams for Sister Pleases. Take the silver cloud and Wicket, Sister Pleases, take the silver cloud and Wicket to stop screams. Stop screams and tears, Sister Pleases. No more screams for Sister Pleases. No more screams for Sister Pleases.

Civilian Praise for the Volvo C304*

Cream of tarter tribesmen saved me from hunger
 poured fat into a felt bowl
 then seized my Volvo 6x6
 and crashed it through a Laundromat window.

What to do?

Peeked into washers /dryers
 bleaching paintings by Pontormo,
 drank coffee from a communal carafe.

Alfred, I have saved your attempts at a journal
 your blood splattered kerchief
 your death poems and chalk-on-the-wall incantations
measuring line upon measuring line
 and while I turn your mortal whisper
 housed in a cloisonné urn,
 I recall your words,
 “there’s much that remains to be done.”

* Published in slightly different form in the pages of *Invisible Ink Poetry*

Dissipate Fever, Tranquelize Mind*

Went to the park at noon hour.
Tossed some post-dated checks onto the ground
To feed the capitalists.

They say that once your illness is costing the system money,
A doctor is coerced into giving you a lethal injection.

I've heard it said that prosperity is determined by the whiteness of your teeth.

Listen. We take our bread from those who control the cinnabar. The medical profession thrives on waters from Death's cup. The Monégasque prince relaxes his hold on the physician. Together they watch a smuggler's boat as it dances a gavotte down the muddy river, fated for wharfs teeming with live cargo and sun-baked flesh.

* Published in *Invisible Ink Poetry*. It's true what they say about lightening.

Radio Reloj AM/FM
(When A Girl Has Had Enough)*

Time's up,
 Song's over.
 Roll over,
 Roll out,
 Get your body up and out of your sidewalk cot,
 And walk.

Gesture drawing, blind contour drawing.
 She wants to draw along the edge of memory
 Where the contours of your hobo bus meets evening sky
 And crush it.
 She wants to take your free-for-all, lack-a-day, lily-fair la-ti-di-da
 And pop it in the mouth of an E-Z Crusher.
 She'll dance as it chomps,
 Eviscerates and masticates.

She's cut off the crazy money for stilt walkers and free fallers,
 Carpet baggers and
 Sidewalk posers.

She's turned a fire hydrant hose on foul-mouthed buskers who
 Foam and moan and fowl the noonday air.
 She's sending quarters by the hatful
 Back to the United States Treasury.

She's poaching poachers.

She's cleaning house,
 So look out!
 Her cleanser kills roaches.

A vagabond a day
 Keeps the handouts at bay.

* Published in *Invisible Ink Poetry*. 'Then we broke for lunch.

Labannotation for Dancing on Tin

Eight years ago,
 Noticing the indentation in the face
 Of your bedroom doorknob,
 You pulled out a Swiss army knife
 And got cracking.

Shazam! There it was, a secret plastic hideaway,
 Now home to your high school ring, various torn
 Tickets from theme park rides, a picture of a starlet
 From *TV Guide*. She remains unreachable, albeit
 A faithful confidante and source of inspiration.

You took a correspondence course in accounting.
 Got a job in a big box bizarre.
 Made an unshakeable oath to bathe twice daily.

You've poured all your savings into oatmeal crème pies.

That starlet-sans-name,
 She's
 The rosette button
 On your trailer ceiling tile,
 The recurring pattern of
 A funny mirror seamstress,
 Sewing up the ramparts
 Of your heart.

Opera Chronique (Vehicle for Street Talk, Old Saws and General Despondency)*

The Scene:

Parking lot outside the Anti-tubercular Clinic, Alessandria, Italy. Midnight.

The Players:

Two men and a boy (narrator) seated in a Fiat Nuova 500 automobile. A fourth figure pays a special visit, only to exit the scene with the two orderlies.

As droplets of rain thundered upon the streets, reflections of city light in pools of muddy water and gasoline were fractured into a riot of rainbow ripples. Uncle Noh played absently with a banana skin, and then placed it upon my father's head with all the sanctimony appropriate when crowning a king. Dad sighed but otherwise failed to respond.

"Now Jubal," said Uncle Noh to Dad, "remember this story our Pop related years ago, while he could still raise his voice and command the world to shut up and take notice. Pop tried to sucker-punch a saltcellar salesman into coughing up a drachma coin for the retrieval of his precious little cur from the talons of the great-eyed owl. Pop played the shamster, and a hootchy-kootchy girl a wise bird of prey. But the saltcellar salesman spat upon both of them, and then parted with this old chestnut: 'Ricky's Yorkie Fouled Bone Fields in Vain'."

Dad removed the banana skin from his head, and then sang this dyer's rhyme:

*Niddy noddy,
chair-to-chair,
tannin baths and dye.
Stick the fiber in the pot
ply by single ply.*

*Gladiolas, mountain ash,
spruce and cinquefoil.
Rhododendrons picked in June
Give colors vitriol.*

*(Beige and yellow,
Sagebrush green,
and deep blue vitriol.)*

Uncle Noh snatched the banana skin from Dad's hand and tossed it out the window.

"Abram had his fair company of confederates" he muttered, "while Abe, in all honesty, had one big headache."

Grand Pop opened the window of his second storey room in the Anti-Tubercular Clinic (room N^o 212).

"I recall an old ballad," he growled, "called *Famine and Feast*. It should clear everyone's palate:

* Published in *The Centrifugal Eye* and *The American Drivel Review*

*Jazz is preparing for winter--little nuts
and half wits covering in scarves
and flannel coats
while bending soulful, minor notes
and scouring linty pockets for splayed
fifths, riffs, and stray vestiges
of tin can cantatas.
Blue skin's hypothermia
counters Hawaiian pineapple floats
frozen in blocks of sub-arctic sea.
Tall drink umbrellas topple, unseen,
until solstice pries spring into
fiery unfolding of simmering birdsong,
woodwinds whirling brassy bits of chatter
while a tardy sun descends
into a brazen diluvium of roses and bees.*

To which I added this tart epigram:

*Congratulations, Offenbach,
roadster winner!
Must confess, however,
that I've always preferred a shrinking violet
to a shrieking harlot.*

Grand Pop escaped through his window by way of a bed sheet, coughing all the while with two male orderlies poised from the ground to ease his final descent. I removed a vase from its nest of tissue paper in a foiled bag--spoils from one of mother's covert shopping sprees--and did my best to draw a curtain on the scene by means of this poem:

*Turn the chambered windstorm counterclockwise--
ethereal, veined glass,
blood-hued, prismatic--
observe this crimson vase.
'Tis heart-shaped, crowned with thorns.
Opalescent, yet funereal
as it stands guard
against dawn's lead-paned window!*

At this point in my impromptu recitation, Grand Pop was safe in the arms of the two orderlies, who now led him back inside. The sun had begun to rise and the rain had made a retreat. Later, Dad would return to fetch the banana skin, as a kind of memento.

Kingdom of Fez (Ruins)*

1.

Half past four/
Walking out the door/
Gonna sell a diamond
And a '57 Ford.
Oh, money....

2.

That's daddy striding waving smiling goodbye
into the bicentennial parade
tambourine and baton pinto wagon papier-mâché float
Budweiser blanket spread out on the hill
and in the persistence of memory/
mid-jump/
I unsnap my parachute
waiting for peace to bleed through

3.

Jumped out of bed in my burning pajamas/
Swam a roaring river and jumped a train/
In six months time I might poke around in Eden/
In six months time I might be dead again

4.

POETRY KILLS

PACKAGED IN A FACILITY THAT PROCESSES EGGS, WALNUTS, AND
PEANUTS.

* Published in *Zone*, *Arsenic Lobster*, and *The Salt River Review*

Lamentation Lazzi from Beggary Road*

1. Public Notice of an Entertainment (Excerpt)

Numb knuckle, honey suckle!
Typhoid Mary and Calamity Jane!
Witness the Consumption of Dour Ladies
in this pneumonia-plagued mouthful
of maniacal couplets, petitions and contrition
authored and proffered by the double-talking,
gin-hawking, sideward-walking dragoman!

2. Rachel, wife of Col. Augustus Sparhawk , ae. 56

Resigned to her fate and without complaint, Rachel
succumbed to the 18 year illness that deprived her face
of features, replacing them with tales
illuminated in thread, dye and aloe. No one
dared read the tales that destroyed skin, muscle,
and bone, rendering her blind, deaf, and mute.

Food was crushed and made into a paste,
then inserted into her æsophagus, until
that fateful day when, resigned to her fate
and without complaint, Rachel
succumbed to the 18 year illness
that deprived her face of features,
replacing them with illuminated tales
written in thread, dye and aloe.

Upon her death,
a local carpenter constructed
a plain coffin and did not charge
Col. Augustus Sparhawk the normal
half dollar for labor and materials.

The doctor called to her deathbed wrote
into his calfskin covered notebook
these observations:

Four tapestries appear on Mrs. Sparhawk's face,
rolled up and bound by gut strings braided
into a thick sash.
They bear the ambitious caption,

* Published in *Aquapolis*, issue No. 2, and *The American Drivel Review*

*Atención Asociados:
Por favor lávese las manos
con agua tibia y jabón
antes de regresar trabajo.*

The first three tapestries relate
the travels of King Solomon to New Jersey
by bus, electric railcar, and unicycle.
They are likely invented.

On the fourth and final tapestry
there appear three characters: Krazy Kat,
Ignatz Mouse and Punch, who dance
in the heavens with dog, star and man.
They come to life--this "wundafil kat",
this brick-chucking rat,
this paper maché reproduction
of a street rogue
with a hand up his hind quarter,
marching him about.

Cash flow (net) can be summed up thus:
Some inspired ink spots, a puppet,
a handful of stars--bread crumbs
fallen from the table of our cosmos--
and the dark wine of our companions.
They are faithfully transcribed
in thread, dye and aloe,
this not being a summer camp project
thrown together with cigar box-turned-loom,
cheap yarn and comb.

Resigned to her fate and without complaint,
Rachel succumbed to the 18-year illness
that deprived her face
of features, replacing them with illuminated tales
written in thread, dye and aloe.

3. Mr. Ebenezer Lovelace was an epileptic,
given to fits of rage,
notorious for seeking solace in trees
when high waters rose and when Indians attacked.
Was found at the top of a tree,
knitting a sweater for his prize pig,
by Mr. Myron Pekor of Salem, Mass.,
and a group of children coming home from school.
The sweater was pointless,
as the pig had been butchered and
the cuts of meat given to his sister.

It is known that on this occasion
 Mr. Lovelace made strange remarks
 from said high tree, related here as told me
 by the daughter of Mr. Myron Pekor:

Note this link in a tremulous herd of swine,
 his death march interrupted by slashing steel,
 an expiry date replacing his hic jacet.
 Now,
 turn the key until dusk-tinted flesh
 emerges from water's surface.
 Observe!
 A death mask modeled featureless
 in a slick tide of fat.
 Pig might've improved his lot
 had he given up his carob pods
 and followed the prodigal son.

After exhuming a neighbor's dead horse
 and beating it thoroughly
 with the butt of a broken powder musket,
 Mr. Ebenezer Lovelace was arrested,
 aided in escaping imprisonment
 (to ease mounting costs at the expense
 of court and county), and transferred
 with his family
 to Morristown, New Jersey.

His eldest son took it upon himself
 to weld a large cage
 and to place it in the parlor,
 where Mr. Lovelace spent his final days
 (with one notable exception,
 on which day he escaped
 and made additional mischief
 by attempting to dig a hole to China
 in a neighbor's field, claiming
 that he had a personal invitation
 to hear the emperor's court opera).

Corrections

Col. Augustus Sparhawk did not wrestle with an angel.
 Mr. Ebenezer Lovelace did not ford the Jabbok near Penuel.

Harpo's Tape^{*}

Excerpt One:

Rope House

I live in the air and the light that shall shine forever. The sun could go down each evening and rise the next day, to go down again: mine will be an unfailing watch; all that time I shall spend with open eyes.

-- Mohammad Dib,

The Talisman,

Translated by Ra'uf Oda

The man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him. And I, a poor layman, did take food to the blind Lobster back and to the gluttonous priest, at the behest of these wholly indecent persons, and then, having made soup from my own marrow with none left to return to my own lips, did bind the two men in fetters and cast them on a steamer at Lake Station, Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire. And the tall fern of Bowlder Road covered the forgotten farm fields of the town of Sullivan, growing steadily along the dirt road and leaping over stone fences dividing the road from the fields. Weeds and tall grasses and evergreens and hardwoods convene here, dancing while walked out and laid into rope, the dance strand twisted by heavers to the sound of the season's gangsa and gender, the ordeal interrupted only in winter. At springtime's arrival, the spinning, twisting dance reemerges, one patch of weeds or one sort of tree being laid into the strand, until in due time it no longer rises to meet winter's going by, and the gamelan is no longer heard. And I, a poor layman, did take food to the blind Lobster back and to the gluttonous priest, at the behest of these wholly indecent persons, and then, having made soup from my own marrow with none left to return to my own lips, did bind the two men in fetters and cast them on a steamer at Lake Station, Sunapee, New Hampshire. The man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him. The wind started a warning cry through horsehair, paste and straw that insulated the walls. Windows were knocked out pane by pane. Showers and snow destroyed the floors. Timbers were snapped in two. The chimney crashed down into the hearth. The house was sucked into Sheol and now the man who summered in his father's house has passed away like his father before him.

^{*} Excerpt published in *The Centrifugal Eye*

*Excerpt Two: Notes*Gun Dogs

New Jersey
 new insight
 new land
 new material
 new permutation
 new ordnance
 New Testament
 new apology
 new phase
 new start
 new heaven
 new earth
 New Jerusalem.

Imagine that twenty-five years to the day a 12oz. chicken frankfurter had been left behind in a wastepaper basket on floor 8-A of the Emerson Radio Corporation in Parsippany, New Jersey. What would it look like today? Would you eat it?

The A-frame was preceded by numerous building designs, such as the Swedish *vedskjul* (woodshed), and the structures from New Guinea and islands in western Polynesia. The pole-and-thatch house was transformed into the chalet and then into a Whataburger restaurant in Odessa, Texas, c. 1961.

*Excerpt Three: Three Poems*1. Bashed-Up Basho Jazzbo' Song

Worn out and washed up and ill-accomplished
 on this, my final journey.
 And yet, there,
 against the dimming horizon,
 go ragged boys,
 dragging my dreams on stick and string.

2. Mako Mamba (16 Frames Per Second)

Is a door a dunkin' donut sounding board, playing spendthrift swain to sight and sound's swallow while pacifying matron's hunger and cuckold's loathing? Mother devoured modern psychiatry by the bedside choc' box, every nugget a diversion sorely missed. Sarai, go niggle the lithographic child, the long awaited heir, the heir-blown sun. O', can you spy him through that fog-filled oasis, that Wednesday's child of woeful malaise, standing in a field of hallelujah maize? Is a door a dunkin' donut sounding board, playing spendthrift swain to sight and sound's swallow while pacifying matron's hunger and cuckold's loathing?

Sunday seeks respite from within, disclaiming the joys to be had from sin.
Turn a bruised and bandaged heel. Dance your procrustean reel.

3. A Corn and Alphagheti From Behind

SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD fills your plate if not your palate
SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD in three easy steps
with additional suggestions for
SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD with red wine and marzipan.
Trepan the friendly green giant. Steal away his old green beans
no variety really chick peas and pomegranate pie
filling fit to make you, Big Sur aficionado,
break into tortured, tearful agony
but the ground is most grateful for
SUDDENLY PASTA SALAD leftovers
and drained green bean water fresh
from the can from which Harry Partch shakes his fist
in defense of this, his tin can seminal sanctuary,
ah, this two for one dollar womb of polyalphabetical compositions
trysts and nihilist transpositions thumped wantonly
whack-a-mole-fashion on what Harry describes
as Bob the Polymer Side-O-The-Mouth Talking Drum.

Now
if you can't find yourself an-honest-to-goodness
can opener in the corner cabinet, then try prunes.

Sources:

- ♦ Assorted postcards appearing on the walls of Citizens Bank, Pleasant St., Claremont, NH.
- ♦ Davies, Gareth Alban (1991). *Lazarillo De Tormes*. Newtown: Gwasg Gregynog, Ltd.
- ♦ Randl, Chad (2004). *A.-Frame*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- ♦ Robinson, William F. (1976). *Abandoned New England: Its Hidden Ruins and How to Find Them*. Boston: New York Graphic Society

- ♦ Seward, J.L., D.D. (1921). History of the Town of Sullivan New Hampshire 1777-1917, Vol. 1. Keene, NH: J.L. Seward Est.

Little Lord Fontanel*

To Bob--whom everyone knows, or would like to.

Chapter XII--Of lions habituated to seize deer, and eagles ordered to seize wolves.

1.

Clouds on the horizon. Six sirens wailed. Mother, in alarm, wept tears of blood and milk. A bearded thief--baneful and watchful like the guileless snake--removed his victim's signet ring and took to hiding in the lake.

Did he feast upon the catfish? Were his pockets full of scones? Did he bring to water's surface gilded leopards carved from bone?

2.

William Reuben's fight with jaundice is made obvious in this single-surviving portrait (drawn by a street artist on Rue St. Denis) and even in this rough oil pastel we can see that he had few days left to rework the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* as a performance piece (a dining car crashes through a supermarket window) accompanied by three minor notes plucked upon a piece of bailing wire nailed to a knacker's door. It was just as well. The northern lights unveiled themselves as William drove his taxi into the Montreal night.

3.

Marty Volkslied sings in his mirth loving way: "Three peremptory cheers for fine-feathered Feagh and his keeper, Fortunato!"

Fortunato opines to Feagh (between breezy inhalations of laughing gas):

"Never again shall we confide in our bought sons. One shall do one sort of work while the other does another. The worm fence shall divide them."

Feagh's fat face spreads into a crapulous smile.

"Never again," he crows. "Not ever, no never, never be it so! Not ever again, de facto! Make the bought boys work the worm fence! Farm out the fault line! Never again, both in poor and fine weather, never again shall we speak them whatever!"

"Stick with me," coos Fortunato. "Stick with me, little Feagh, like a cockroach to turd."

"Like a cockroach to turd," chirps Feagh. "Like a cockroach who listens to larvae in turd I shall act on your low-spoken, venomous word!"

Darkness lingers within bright sons.

'Neath the eaves Noel whispers to Bo:

* Published in *Zone*—International forum for experimental poetry and prose, and *Trillium Literary Journal*.

“Go skip-bomb the wordmongering, tinhorned Jack and hear his sad chide chime in a flashflood of flatulent timpani over the Seven Seas.”

Meanwhile, as Bob lies browning in the noonday sun, Marty Volkslied sings outside the door:

“Buffo’ floribunda, tabula rasa,
band organ marches and
Washington pie, our
tabourer with calfskin and fife
trolled rosy-colored,
third-hand hymnals rife
with cloying clumps of storm cloud
leavened
through homage to promised wassailer’s
third heaven.

“Three turns of the crank
as he caroled the town,
singing ‘Riddle-me-roundelay, Old Mr. Brown!’”

4.

Two boys--one aged six, the other eight--
contest over woolly mountains
and scorched field
with aerial evocations to Popeye.

Their bed gives final warning of
earthquake
while the youngest pees conspiratorially off
the edge into
darkness,
making a trip to the bathroom (where Dad,
his face a
torn map of blood, alcohol and vomit)
unnecessary.

5.

Inside a back street car wash in New Orleans,
two bayou smithies
hold their war criminal firmly
by his coat sleeves of Scottish tweed--

a cleric pinned down in his own clipper
by the pirate boys Lafitte.

The cleric recalls a scene
from a nature program,

in which a lion devours a fawn.
Beads of red light trickle
over portholes draped in steam.

The cleric removes a breastpin--
a tree-of-life
from the Field of Gold,
asking that his life be spared.

"We're sorry," intone his captors
gravely, "but we cannot process your plea
at this time."

Inside a back street car wash
in New Orleans,
a fawn nibbles on a timid lion.



**Over Spätlese, Jefferson Salamander
Prates to the Pied-Billed Grebe***

While yucca moths pollinate flowers
Between dusk and midnight
I drive upside down
To get that gas gauge hand to set free the E--
I need to fill up before the van awakens to its thirst.

Maybe some caterpillars will mistake the van
For a four-wheeled plant,
Eat it whole.

Maybe some sultry Latino darkling beetle
Will enter my periphery,
Then kick in my windshield window.

All that's certain
Is that no Coke machine in Holyoke
Will give me what I want:
Honeysuckle nectar in a can for me and my van.

* Appeared in *Illogical Muse*

Executive Decision
Formulated in Mind Meld
(Haight Ashbury)
(Map)*

Starving artist seeks grocery flyers and newspaper articles,
 Found photos and labels from imported films,
 Maybe an opera hat and then again
 Maybe a one way ticket to Iceland,
 A corduroy suit and a man's full wig in a conventional cut,
 Or maybe a poem dealing with tapioca
 And how it's hard to break up the ice flow, or
 Some tap shoes or a sofa.
 Send the item you see purposeful
 To delineate shaded meanings between
 Midsummer's fire and fulcrum to:
 Cow meets robot/executive decision formulated in mind meld
 (Attention: Emperor Norman, Ethereal Documentarian)
 Community Kitchen, 1525 Waller Street.
 San Francisco CA 94117

* Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle* and *The American Drivel Review*

Backs of Heads
Beck Had Sofa

Rebecca had the sofa in the Sawdust Café.
She
Looked between the backs of overlapping heads
To read the *Seattle Times* held by
Two Japanese Tourists seated on the floor, delighting
In the mystery of architectural criticism,
Which seemed to fuel laughter
Through the struggle to translate in tandem.

Boy's Life

In Rockland, Maine some years ago,
 Two men and an orphan boy
 Named Constant Bliss
 Went to the corner gas mart
 To buy some alewives in a tub for bait,
 That
 And day's end doughnuts and coffee.
 Whaleboat in tow
 Behind their pickup trucks.
 A conversion van pulled up to the gas pump,
 And following pumping gas, the driver—
 One teen, drunk and disheveled,
 Known locally as Worm,
 Pulled out a Russian rifle
 And shot at the two men
 And the boy coming out. Missed
 Bliss.
 Two men went down like that--dead. Bliss
 Effectually hid himself behind an unattended bush
 Around the back. Cashier called the police,
 Disarmed Worm at gunpoint,
 Took him in. The two dead men were wrapped up,
 Rushed off the scene.
 Constant Bliss didn't move from his spot till nightfall—
 Cops never saw him—
 And hoofed it to Lake Chickawaukie for a couple days,
 Then hitchhiked west. Took the last run
 From Chicago to LA on the Santa Fe *Chief*.
 Took up animal husbandry for Television.
 Dabbled in south-of-the-border denturism.
 Then returned to Rockland. Nobody recognized Bliss,
 All grown up.
 But the cormorants and shags finding sanctuary up in Lake Chickawaukie
 Changed their song to suit the occasion,
 And the fishermen remarked
 That they were getting a much better yield.

Roaring Ruritania

Village or clot?
Assault reductions.
The password.
Sleep, young meat.
Zebra rears from the inside,
and becomes,
in the end, the gendarme.

An ambitious resolution,
which is evil.
Create. He is live meat,
with increasing indebtedness
to the unseen.

What remains?
Us. Bone
is a parasitic form of trust
foisted upon children,
ground into mystery animal burger,
discarded with shoes
that adorned feet of lepers.

Zoophilism stalemate/zebra's neck.

Bloom Toy

Full Cold Moon.

Dr. Walter Freeman shows up late.

Gets out, weekender suitcase in one hand.

Asks if his van is in the way.

Wiping his mouth over Freezer Queen

Sirloin steak and mashed potatoes,

Freeman smiles, shows off an ice pick,

Wipes it off with a chamois cloth.

Tells a story about performing two lobotomies at once

While suspended from the ceiling with steel cables.

Says you look the picture of health.

Borrows a pair of pajamas, excuses himself

And heads for bed.

You can't sleep. You pour yourself the last cup of coffee,

Open a phone bill with the ice pick.

Please insert (un)common sense.

I'm grinding out telephone sausage for the cosmically disenchanted. Your wife just left you. Won't let you see the kid. It's filler for the meat. Grind it all up. Dropped out of school at 14, spent the next thirty in a parking lot as a cart boy in cold Chicago winters. Cart boys don't get tips. That's all right. Chump change makes the meat taste bad anyway. Just move it, Dad, grind up the meat. Your boss calls you a screw up. Grind it up, Charlie. Social worker, parole officer--same thing. Grind it all up. Let's use some more filler. Throw in dried tears, blood from fists in the face, boarding room broken glass, curses flung at the invisible like old bricks, missing and gouging the floorboards. Hat pins pushed into skin at the state hospital. Death. Plastic flowers on your grave. They come from your daughter, estranged, and, like you, also a dreamer. The pay phone spells out a mnemonic prayer. It's mentions you by name, and no one's there to hang up.

Crepuscule: 5 Poems for Milton Acorn, 'The People's Poet', 1923-1986

THE Raven croak'd as she sate at her meal,
And the Old Woman knew what he said,
And she grew pale at the Raven's tale,
And sicken'd and went to her bed.
--Robert Southey (1774-1843),
The Old Woman of Berkeley

1.

Shore Front

Haze. Manx cat's crying
from a wet field. Ravens
hang over in mid-flight,
drop, talons grappling
for flesh. Hornets gather
on our window pane,
sun burns all before drowning.

2.

Waiting for the Moment

Work shirt dotted w/ blood
from the mouth of your pen
spread clean, damp
across oilcloth on yr table.
No new dream spells
of late,
just worn words mumbled
in boarding house
sleep,
likening illustrationstoillustrations.

3.

Anniversary

Harlequins at sunset,
 red-haired boys
 dance in Eaton's costumes.
 Sailboats muse over well-known waters,
 idly searching for new waves.

4.

Wind Pokes 'Round

Vomit thru lacework;
 gnarled feet bound
 in crumpled newsprint/
 dark winds howl
 inside your sanctuary
 Bits of stolen fish stuck
 between broken teeth,
 you cough a warm poem into folds
 of torn blanket.

5.

Victoria Park

Our poet got planted in a pauper's grave,
 unreformed face covered over in pasteboard.
 He willed to his buddies from City Cab:
 Home movies of ravens in Victoria Park,
 old poems left creaking at the joists.



Run, Peter Run*

“The principles of physics, as far as I can see, do not attempt to violate any laws; it is something, in principle, that can be done; but in practice, it has not been done because we are too big.”-- Richard Feynman, 1959 lecture, “There’s Plenty of Room at the Bottom”

David’s not quite two years old, this blond-haired boy, seated with his sleeping great grandfather on a public bus in a gray wool suit and black tie, patent leather shoes with the laces left undone, and he’s ready to sing for a preschool play, *Peter Rabbit*. He’s one of several silent sunflowers. Older classmates, dressed as crows, cheer up Peter Rabbit.

Run, Peter, run

Run, Peter, run

Stop your crying

Keep on trying

Run, Peter, Run

Run, Peter, Run

The bus makes a stop outside Tuck Mall in Dartmouth College. No one—not the driver, nor any departing students from the Tuck or Thayer schools, and certainly not the great grandfather, who has turned his nap into a permanent engagement—notices the little boy jump off the bus.

To a boy not even two years old, the world is one open door leading to another. In this case, one open door leads to a symposium in Thayer School, where a group of leading engineers from around the globe are eating world cuisine off paper plates between lectures about nanotechnology.

David gravitates toward three men—all around his great grandfather’s age, and, also like his great grandfather, endowed with white hair and unkempt beards. He introduces himself and shakes their hands.

“I’m two,” he says. “I’m a sunflower.”

David has shaken the unshakeable. They are suitably impressed.

“One of our younger colleagues?” suggests one.

“One of our shorter ones, certainly,” says another.

The boy has moved on. A flight of stairs leads him to an empty lecture room. There, he activates the overhead projector, and climbs a portable stair to change the hands on an atomic clock. It is now five minutes to twelve.

* Published in *Hapa Nui*

Eddie's Rag

*In Which Exercises in Harmony and Counterpoint
Fill the Eyes of Conlon Nancarrow and William Albright*

That toil of growing up;
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
Of boyhood changing into man;
The unfinished man and his pain.
--William Butler Yeats, 1865-1923
*The Winding Stair and Other
Poems* [1933]. *A Dialogue of Self
and Soul*, II, st. I

① Wheels. Past stucco shanties with white trim. Rain. A mother tears laundry from the line. Mud. Pavement comes to those who prosper. See the boy's bike pedaled by a man. ② All grown men leave the traits of a babe. All grown men discard their tooth-worn toys. All grown men save you, dear Eddie, who never left the traits of a babe. For reality's clutched between the tight crib bars that guard and sustain your world. ③ Smell of crate planks--raw-and oiled cogs. Sound of ragtime pumped from an Armstrong player. Sight of wind-up cops on a make believe beat thumping spinning tops with cheap, tin sticks. ④ At twelve years of age Eddie got his first pair of trousers. "No more knickers for him," his father said. Or like his Uncle Otto said, "Even a half-wit is entitled to a pair of trousers." ⑤ Mrs. Framer wanted music in the house. Mr. Framer bought an Armstrong player. Paid in installments with no money down, it came with twenty-three rolls of ragtime. Eddie liked to watch the punched dots fall. He pedaled and watched until each rag was finished. Hours spent at the player piano, watching the punched dots fall. ⑥ From your lips pass nothing but a moan. Now and then, a few stray words. "Stretch cloud," you might say, and from this is born the ideas of others, and from

these are born a Keystone film starring Keystone cops who manage to stretch a cloud. ⑦ Pine slats and white linen. Noon light spills through clean cloth. Softness and serenity. Peace. ⑧ Three cloth covered sets hammered side by side. Three comedies shot from nine until noon. Mabel, with herring eyes agog, pounds upon the door. "Let me IN!" she roars. Just a bed sheet away, Chaplin tangos with a bearded maid. Last set to the right is a mountain of pies and cops. ⑨ At lunch time the actors cross the street. Nickel hot dogs are sold at the general store. "Speed it up, Frank! Tell Jack to hurry up!" From studio to store and back again, all inside five short minutes. ⑩ Legs in silk stockings, a turn for the camera. Paper bleeding hearts. Flowers cut from a catalogue. A rocking horse, wanting to run, struggles free from its steel frame. All conceived in the noon rain.. While you pedal by, a young girl nurses a baby grand. "A long time ago t'was a wee, sma' boy who wanted and wanted to grow." A gingham frock and old rose slippers. Mother rolled dough to make a gingerbread man. "Said the magic fish, 'I shall grant you one wish,' and the wee, sma' boy became a big, BIG boy! So his

mama made him all new clothes.” ⑪ Eddie got dressed for his first day at school. A blue tweed suit and golf style cap. Black kid button shoes bought for lots of wear. Ironed, pressed, and polished bright. All for mama’s gingerbread man. ⑫ In a 98¢ chemise, Mabel paints her arms, face and neck like the dime store Venus she is. Everyone loves our Mabel. By the LA curb shooting quick one-reelers--in the barn stall wardrobe daubing lids and lips--as a nitrate specter in a neighborhood theater--everybody loves our Mabel. While she paints her face, Eddie watches from the open door. ⑬ *A note to the projectionist: Please project at 5,000 feet per minute. The Chase.* Jumping from a cliff onto a moving streetcar, tumbling down stairs and kissing concrete walls, driving herds of cattle through a flop house lobby--all for the sake of the chase. Chaplin kicks a cop in the pants. The cop turns ‘round. He jumps up and down--once, twice, thrice. Chaplin takes flight down Main Street, with the cop and twelve others in hot pursuit. All for the sake of the chase. ⑭ Dahlias. Chocolate foiled petals wax into hairsprings, curling around pendulums, crystals, and chimes. a factory clock with petaled guts. ⑮--says the rag doll--a hairbrush stolen for Mabel--you stretch cloud--Mabel gives those cops a smile--when my roll plays--Eddie, give the brush to Mabel. Mabel squeals, then laughs. She hugs the brush to her breast. “For *me?*” she asks. She blows Eddie a kiss. “Now let a poor girl get dressed,” she says. “Go on now, *scoot.*” ⑯ Wind it up and it rattles along: a tin, yellow duck with a white chef’s hat, pushing a cart full of cakes. ⑰ Tremolo. The reappearance of splintered syncopation anticipated long before heard. Your heart ticks fast. A rag doll lies in the gutter, soaking up rain.

You clear soot from her button eyes. Mabel slams her door shut while mama bakes pies. ⑱ Flour’s scattered on the bread board. Soft wood burns in the kitchen stove. “Now Eddie,” says mother, “Please stop pulling my hair. My bridge party’s at three and how would I look with my hair untidy? Now be good and go ride your bike.” ⑲ A boy’s bike with maple rims. “C’mon, Jack,” said Uncle Otto, “what kind of fool are you to spend twenty bucks on a kid’s bike? Eddie might get himself hurt. Get your boy a rocking horse. Oversized. Keep Eddie off the street. Busy street like this, no sense spending twenty bucks so he can get himself hurt.” ⑳ Nothing on the road except a Ford Speedster, tearing up puddles on both sides.㉑ The belly of a great machine realized in full: Pigskin bellows and cast iron wheels breathe and churn within a spruce box. Air whistles through punched holes. forged hammers strike cobwebs, making them sing. ㉒ The rag doll scales cobwebs. Hammers stick into her back. Button eyes are torn from their sockets. Mother burns pies. Legs and arms are pressed into pulp. Mabel smiles. the music stops. ㉓ Nothing on the road except a Ford Speedster, tearing--

Pomelo:

Midnight Trial for a Broken Vessel*

Scene 1: Bar in the Basement
of a Three-Star Hotel.

Watch them wrestle:
Plastic fruit trees and
origami waves drown TV surfing trolls.

Watch them struggle:
Pop stars mouth
scuffed word and treason
(second-hand, ill-served, unnerved and unseasoned)while, in caustic counterpoint,
radio pounds the top ten countdown
into bar stool's intoxicated guest.

It's far to late in the hour
for greatness (fallacious, fine-spun or otherwise)
to take in the scene, surmise and then lean heavy
on the weak joists of the cave dweller's cave while the
phantoms of fellers light up this depraved litany.
Lives have been lost over less sought-out Sodoms
than these.

Not So Much Scene 2 as a Commentary Inserted
Between Memory's Frames

Opening remarks:
The devil was the prettiest angel
that there ever was. Then he fumbled around
with his hand in the gutter for an attitude,
and upon finding one, kept it in his pocket until it turned bad.

Sometime afterward,
the devil taught my daughter
(then budding into flower,
and thus pock-marked,
awkward, and perpetually moody)
how to drink, smoke and cuss,
and the best way to strangle
and finagle

* An excerpt from this poem appeared in an edition of *languageandculture.net*

the lives out of men
 with nary a scar,
 drop of blood,
 speck of mud,
 thunder's dud,
 fuss or muss.

Concluding remarks:

I draw solace
 from those oft' mistaken,
 the long down trodden and
 the (once) God-forsaken.

They have taken up sheaves
 they have learned not to grieve
 (with their hollow-sounding sobs and their
 tears on their sleeves)
 for their deeds performed in darkness
 while yesterday's moon lay hid.

Unlike the devil in the corner
 with his hate for this place
 etched in the creases that
 traverse his face.

Scene 3

*Bells of Constantinople
 always seem to ring
 when the melting sun
 descends the hill
 chasing horses, carriage
 and king.*

*Bells of Constantinople
 seldom cease to ring.
 Please ask the bellkeep
 to silence them
 for I long to hear him sing.*

His songs are packed
 with fauves and prophets.
 He illuminates his chorus
 with Gabriel and Gauguin.

He's my first born from the maiden
who taught me how to sing again.

A feast of psalms against this burning,
August sky.
Watch them sparkle, darken, die.

*Bells of Constantinople
always seem to ring
when the melting sun
descends the hill
chasing horses, carriage
and king.*

Death made his first wife look ridiculous,
like an old, stuffed cat
in a straw brim hat,
her body disfigured, powdered,
made fat
from cotton meant to soften
the hollows of her
palsy-haunted-face.

From her the bellkeep learned
that suffering's an alchemy
of Christ's tears and saffron.

Where she rests--does it matter?
Her bones were sharpened into points
to harpoon the callused alchemist
and pry apart his joints.

*Bells of Constantinople
always seem to ring
when the melting sun
descends the hill
chasing horses, carriage
and king.*

*Bells of Constantinople
seldom cease to ring.
Please ask the bellkeep
to silence them
for I long to hear him sing.*

Flagrant Psalmster's notes:

Constantinople has at present an excellent public transit system.

Nobody need hustle to find me a soapbox. However, some soap and a wash bowl would be appreciated in the interest of innocent passers by.

Some details have been altered to suit the peculiar frame of this rhyme (size 38 at the shoulders when played in 4/4 time).



Pain Tome 5*

And Zachery Snowfield the Incredible Breathing Speed Dancer
 Who earned twenty six dollars every two weeks
 Mopping the floor in a portrait studio
 Took a job in a shipyard in Kittery, Maine.
 He signed on to a ship and was returning from Havana
 When a storm blew him off the mainstay
 And into shark infested waters.
 A sharp-eyed deck hand threw him a lifeline.
 Zach thanked him with a boot to the head.
 "There's a mermaid out there," he growled.
 "Name is Vonny Hedlund.
 She was writing down her phone number
 And everything. Best thing that ever happened to me
 And you had to mess it up."
 He was reunited with her on a second trip
 And they got married in Walled Lake, Michigan
 During a Hewett Theater dance marathon contest.
 They were team ~~No.~~ 6 ¾.
 The sailor groom and his mermaid bride
 Would go on to win thirty-two contests across the country
 Until they were banned from nationals
 On account of Vonny's fish tail.
 Their wedding cake was ten feet tall,
 850 pounds and required 2500 spectators to help eat it.
 No further events are recorded until thirty-six years later
 When Zach was killed in an electrical fire
 At the Transcontinental Toe & Heel Tap factory.
 A Harrington rod implant correcting his scoliosis
 Was retrieved from the ruins
 And used to identify his remains.
 Vonny was left penniless and took a cleaning job
 In a tuna fish cannery near Gate 5 on San Francisco Bay.

*Previously appeared in *Zone*, *Temenos*, *The Salt River Review* and *Trillium Literary Journal*

Devinette Wonder:
Savez-vous pourquoi
le pain Wonder™
est si spécial?
(Notes from Dada's *Epivitalia*)

The Planet Earth Toy Theatre welcomes you.
 We'll tell you tall tales with conviction,
 wrapping up voice bytes
 with old songs and twinkling eyes.
 Tonight: Marine Band gob iron
 and nylon stringed guitar
 smooth over scabbed news and controversy/
 Revolution with a two-step
 and old lace.

It is five minutes to one.
 Outside there's a blizzard
 with the finest snow the flakes
 so white and small
 they are easily carried
 in the wind.
 The trees turn cold.

Vu à la télé (caption on b-roll under loquacious monologue):
 Picture of firstborn as new earth. Veins on his head are a hieroglyph of the laughing tiger.

Bob the mechanical eight-eyed spider says into camera's eye:

"A fragment of lodestone fails to point north. There's a wound in my heart that no ten dollar salve can cure. Tonight, my mother performs after dinner impersonations of TV celebrities (both the famous, obscure), then goes out to kill our next meal (she hunts grizzly from the safety of a taxi window).

"When my song is wanting, waning, pining, streaming, blood-stained and atrophied; when my story is burnt into fine, white chalk and packed tight in a pit via saltpeter and mop stick; when angels cease to sing; when love is given a fare-thee-well glued to a key from heaven's gate tied fast to Franklin's kite; will you scream of hate in mono while I bleed in black and white?

"I confess: After signing my name on a deed for a bad loan at high interest in a booth at the back end of a railroad dining car stuck in a patch of weeds in a small factory town in New Hampshire, I promised my father (the benefactor) to swallow the names of five ill-famed friends inscribed on a fragment of dried skin with dye from a Judas friend. Don't let *this* happen to *you*.

Against hound's tooth checks between decisive moments, this scrolling summation ala Paul Revere:

FREE TRADE INTO LAW
 7 GERMANS ARE BOMBED
 NEW PROPOSAL EXPLODES
 6 CANADIANS PERPLEXED
 TONIGHT CLOUDY WITH FLURRIES
 WATCH TONIGHT FOR DETAILS.

The automated bug persists in his TelePrompTer prattle:

“From a high shelf in the broom closet sits this remarkable find: A one liter jar depleted of pickled toadstools replenished with estate sale hearing aids and clip-on bow ties circa 1954. The ties belonged to Buddy Holly. One hearing aid contains clandestine physics from the former Soviet Union, allowing one to classify conversations from times past.

“Earlier today, we spoke to our studio custodians, Little Boy and Fat Man. While cleaning out the broom closet they stumbled upon the queer cache. Soon thereafter, they tested this auditory apparatus/neckwear ensemble while cleaning the men’s room, and insist they could hear Vasco da Gama sing *Peggy Sue* in the Portuguese.”

Opines Nebuchadnezzar as a flour-faced clown:

“Feed the machine.

Everything is truth in black and white
 all things are truth in black and white
 there is no lie without the lie of color
 everything is truth in black and white
 but never color.

Women are mysterious.”

While crouching behind Bob the eight-eyed spider, Nebuchadnezzar sways the newscaster’s jaw to this gross slab of treacle:

“The opium substance of a plastic movie in a passenger car previously belonging to ex-patriot walrus Julius Rugby remains a mystery, but the saga of the 8mm documentation clicking spool has been knotted. The seventy-seventh Chaplin clicking spool portrays beatniks in a keyhole.”

“And now,” croons Bob, regaining his jaw and his dignity, “while barefoot little souls make sneakers for the well-heeled, gramophone socialite Lady Enigma will monkey her spiel in the company of her posse, the Dishonorable Greasy Fish Eggs and Stinky, Old Cheese (a.k.a. White Collar Mobsters and Social Disease).”

“Don’t cast your TV into the bathtub,” squeaks Lady Enigma. “Don’t cast your TV into the bathtub. Don’t forfeit your innocence for a few tawdry moments in the bathtub. There are many authorities and few responsible fathers. Don’t cast your TV into the bathtub.”

Bob can't help but serenade the dispirited damsel.

“How you are the roach...sad-eyed Bloody Mary...drinking deep to stumble...a hollow in the still...” ♫ ♫ ♫

Overheard in the control room:

Lady Enigma seems to have come from farther away than Newark, New Jersey. Case-in-point: she mouths the word ‘TV’ like some Muscovites pronounce the name Zworykin--the earnestness still heard beneath the weight of defeat. Do you realize how difficult that is?

“Don’t cast your TV into the bathtub.”

Do you realize how difficult that is? Camera two.

“Casting your TV into the bathtub automatically nullifies our one year parts and labor warranty and doubtless your entitlement to life.”

“You sing in shrinking trembles...gasps of thin with walking wisps...pretty papers bleeding...your secret lullaby....” ♫ ♫ ♫

At least in the genuine sense. There are many experts and few in the know.

“In summary, we suggest that you don't cast your TV into the bathtub.”

“You fall upon the stage...at different levels past and low...in dirty little moth halls...a mother in the grit....” ♫ ♫ ♫

Which causes one to ask: Are black satin sofas and buildings with clock tops and tracings of gold particularly the healing of coldness and puzzles, or are they the haughtiness of a bald prune? Do spectacles of tortoise shell and tinted lenses attest to assessable intellectualism?

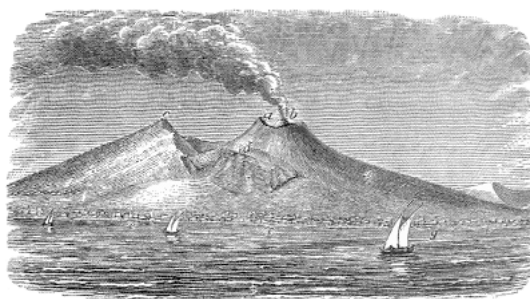
While Bob and Lady Enigma take a bow, a clay bird sings by means of running water; a mechanized Duchamp breaks a window pane; three women contest in a beauty pageant.

What are we to make of stressed leather bomber jackets and five-day stubbles? Or, for that matter, of Hemingway’s posthumous fudge blots in paperback, each emerging fish tale more splintered and unhooked? Do we see us? Or a new kind of farce?

An infant from Pompeii pukes pabulum while a mime in wig and top hat chases a starlet into the mouth of a belching Vesuvius.

Is music metamorphosing into a tidal wave of boundless space? Do 96 footprints of proclamations dancing on Saturn’s rings (both from within and without) assure the coming of the Phantom of Theatrical Representation? If you can transfer six novellas and a critique on egg rolls from HERE to THERE, is this, then, the final gesture?

Perhaps we can both concede that the meaning relies upon the subject at hand.



First Registered Ale House Merger of a Bell Cow to a Ford Sedan Muffler (Castoff)

Ramath-lehi. Lalla Rhook¹: Clearance Parka Turned Chiffon Burqa.

What's the proper decorum when escorting a titled lady through a revolving door? With the jawbone of a jenny the strongman subdued one thousand materialists-“heaps upon heaps!”² Mustn't snivel a musical poem's quarter notes over the agile suitor who smells his own den first. The countess draped fox fur across her shoulders. Black tipped with white falling demurely into this diminutive, akimbo statuette of breeding quickened into affectation. When flames are wrung from steeped softwood torn from lulled drifts of snow, their faint peal can be mistaken for distant chimes. The flames crack one chief yarn into consonant threads sewn inside sister hamlets.

1934. Elizabeth Hartford at Home. Stoneworth.

I. Her Things.

Sloped umbrella table carved in exhibition wood, cluttered piles of books and scripts and tea cups and tea pots and boxes of linen and silverware.

Her parlor sofa could be described as large.

II. Miss Hartford.

Smooth skin, soft eyes; full, curled, bobbed hair. London cotton kiss top, ankles and jazz shoes and calves.

One trousered leg crossed over the other, tilted head, a china cup, painted lips open for drinking.

Returns Dept., Building 5789

I crossed the brooding, shattered street and started searching through the glass the perfect gesture I had passed while captured by my feet.

¹ Lalla Rhook: Something Thomas Moore coughed up when asked to sing for his supper.

² Taken from Judges 15:16 LB, SV. Because the Hebrew for donkey sounds like the Hebrew for heap, NIV translates this as “With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them.” *Ramath-lehi* means “The hill of the jawbone”.

Codfish/Terra Incognita/Thank You*

Letter from the Crypt (or Crib)

To my sister in Nazareth:

Thanks for the fish box ready-made, a
 Molten brew of Shostakovich-stained colors
 Sealed in brooding encaustic
 Over worm-ravaged pearwood.
 Yea, a time capsule
 Of burr-prickled, horsehair inelegance.
 Inside: Your travel itinerary,
 Complete with ribald poems and travel postcards.
 (Why bother to color the obvious?)

Its unraveling compelled me to join you,
 Which, of course, is impossible.
 Instead, I untapped a full case of Madeira
 And, having emptied it some two days later,
 Came to find Franklin, Churchill, and Gandhi
 Playing draughts inside.

Enclosed please find one gramophone,
 Some sinful Cossacks in authentic garb,
 And some pithy proverbs concerning
 Self-preservation.

Yours in the relative sense (nyuck nyuck),
 Danny the Younger,
 St. Petersburg

PS
 Yes, one paints what one hears.

* Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle*, *Ygdrasil: A Journal of the Poetic Arts*, *Arsenic Lobster*, and *The American Drivel Review*

Afterward*

Dandeliar Charles Merrill Mount,
 Née
 Stanley Merrill Suchow,
 Kicks up a shoeshine down San Francisco streets.
 His cane is a cavalry saber.
 Behind him,
 Wind rattles his suit pockets,
 Shakes lockets of confederate generals
 and
 daguerreotype scowls.

Stephen Carrie Blumberg,
 Malodorous savant book bandit,
 Pedals up hill in an ice cream wagon.
 Hack saws, glass cutters and door knobs turn cartwheels,
 Steal free from the deep freeze to dance in the sun.

Emperor Norton bows to Lord Buckley,
 Who,
 In turn
 Bows to Thursday October Christian.
 They exchange cards and courtesies in synchrony
 With vinyl hiccups from the Tijuana Brass.

You fold your hands and take in the scenery,
 The gentle-hearted pageantry, the last Big Three
 Plus two middling Merrills
 In this dandelion-garbage-dump-fruit-fly Yalta.

You say the model prayer by the Caltrain railroad tracks,
 Even though there's no money in it, there's no bottom line,
 There's no tax refund, there's no free gas for a year,
 There's no company car, and
 There's no executive office to be gleaned from it.
 You have some sense of remorse for prying the stars from their settings in the sky.
 That was a bad left turn, Mr. Juke, for the sky took sick and covered its hurt with a long,

* Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle* and *Ygdrasil: A Journal of the Poetic Arts*

Black cowl.

Better They Than the Suitor (One Hour Past the Promised Time)*

A lonely damozel, puffing frumpish hrumphs of cankered resignation, casts her icy glare at an innocent bouquet of camellias.

Down comes the samurai's sword! Ten snow-headed blossoms fall dead to the floor.



* Published in *Ygdrasil: A Journal of the Poetic Arts*

Chapter XI: Has Developed the Unfortunate Habit of Drawing Outside the Lines

O' rev Beryl Aureola sat in his ill-gotten lyre-back chair (mercantile parody of Duncan Phyfe) gouging out eyes from an incautious hare with the stone-sharpened blade of his pistol-gripped knife.

All the while he wheedled and wangled and vamped this sacrosanct eventide scrap of a song (Okeh label, 78rpm):

Yall liss'n here. I was noodlin' the ivories in my brownstone shack away up there in On-tar-I-O, hammerin' out some Goldberg rag in a Floyd-Cramer-one-eyed-Jack-Creole, an' well, then it entard my hid through the kitchen winder tippy-toe-like, \$5 shoes peelin' off 'is stockin' feet, this pianola tango in the ev'ryday key of C. 'N' here goes it: I calls it a *Transposition of the Exotic upon the Conservative Mores of a Rarefied Bean*, (Opus N^o 3):

The schoolgirl knew her Latin
whilst her sister knew her Greek.
One would thrust her folded fan
while the other turned her cheek.
Both were avid players
of lacrosse and hide and seek.
They were
twinned in their hymns
and their night table
shouldered the Word.

And they chimed
when they sang:

The devil's in the alley
and there's rebels out at sea.
We're breaking up the log jam
and we're setting rivers free.
We baked a pie for Mr. Fisch
and spiked his cup of tea.
Turn the key in the lock
of the debtor's gaol.
Let mercy's kindly way prevail!

Those girls never slept, really.
They carried on:


One shall play the soldier's drum
while his kinsman plays the fool.
Some shall kneel in beggar's cloth

before those crowned to rule.

Saponaceous sarsaparilla
 helps the passions cool.
 One shall drink at Pentecost
 while shysters pinch his jewels.
 We've quarrymen and highwaymen
 and both shall ply their tools.
 The shoemaker mourns
 the eve' of his life. Good night!
 'Tis all. (C'est tout).

Then the girls
 harvested dreams...

2.

avid descended through new moon's window
 to watch a hen hop
 to take a line for a walk
 to silence a giant
 with a sling and a rock

Michal

David descended through new moon's window
 to fly over deep-shadowed valley.

And you sweep
 my verandah
 with a song pinned to your Sunday breast
 with that cool, summer smile
 that I like.

The pint-sized girl
 with the crinoline face
 courts a chanter's skirl
 with her contra bass.

She's spinning the turnstile!
 She's working the crowd!
 She's waking dead stars
 in the Magellanic Cloud,
 where

Och bone, Machree!

humming birds fill the sky with dizzying (s)word play 'twixt summer's final bow and a feast of iron caterpillars **shaking their sorry cabooses goodbye**. No bum trapped between track and Connecticut river

can

defeat them. De facto King of
Undesirables buries his head deeper into
beer's laconic bosom in this cobalt
tarpaulin plan for
surrender.

Adieu, Madame Sherri....



**Camera Obscura as Rhetorical Allegory:
Several Commissioned Portraits
Combined Before Ether Had Its Way**

Ball Mill as Ball Flower (Monocle on the Sheepked)

Ulcerous Umbles!
Be gone, Muskrat!
Get, Muntjac!
Flee from the gigolo-turned-fey,
Whited sepulcher, bombsighted by
Moonshine spasms of the cabbage white.
He presents to you from the orchestral pit
(With incidental whistling by Sybil Sanderson Fagan)
Musique Concrete--
Clamorous bowel heaps of
Genuflection, ectoplasmic echoes of the Black Plague.

*The Original Bimbo the Clown
Shall now yield to phantom hands
Tugging nylon-threaded limbs
And sing Yankee Variations
Of Middle English rhymes
For the paltry sum of one quarter.*

Frieze Frame

Knickers badge jaunty-angled cap officer's
Hat bishop's mitre box gold-knobbed
Walking stick mason's pin credibility
Culpable cutaneous raise the dead with
Unsavory, mortal hands
"Anything on Television?"
Rotoscoped hero in flight
Leviathan and shotgunned reality authorized
Biography on Bill (who combed his greasy
Locks for the lens in the photo booth)
Provenance and coat of arms three
Generations inscribed on yellow newsprint
Excerpts crammed inside a cookie tin
*When Christ healed the blind man, did he place
Silver nitrate onto his eyes?
Was our Savior thus permanently fixed upon the
Mind's eye of the sinner?*

Vichyssoise

Some porcine bishop lies hog-tied and
 Spent like a five-cent pawn in dawn's
 Unfolding of mulched leaves and snuffed
 Candles and so much moss-stained marble
 Statuary.

Semaphore

The ever-incessant dulcimer--precursor to the piano--is hammered expertly by an ancient practitioner. He knows which vibrations can be elicited from the reflexive bending of steel strings. Do they differ much from the channels of blood that flow from heart to hand?

Year Without Summer: Rant Etudes *

Dedicated to former patrons of the
Children's Mandolin Orchestra Ukrainian
Labour Temple Association, c.1924

1. Right Lane Must Exi(s)t

(Cara)

Buried under pennies-on-
The-dollar pleasantries,
She was
Josie Elizabeth Veery.
Fingers danced upon a
Three-legged piano,
Winding up the morning
In the evening shade.

Her last words:

*"Things I value most,
They're
Turned black as campfire
Toast.
They're all gone. They're all gone.
Crumbs in a hurricane."*

(Fenwyd)

Subcutaneous secret
Made its way to the tip of
The tongue,
Took a dive and--
PLOP--
Made a belly flop in a
Bowl of soup, staining
The culprit's tie.

(Dangnefedd)

Tool up the tool pusher
Too quietly to be heard.
Under patches of light,
Gather noil combed

* A portion of this poem appeared in *WORM 40*

From folds of painted
Canvas.

Color fosters an
Argument that hurries a
Smart caravel scooped
Up from morning's first
Wave.

As for Henry's Part Song—
It's but one piece
Of a batik sky torn
From a celestial robe.

2. Biff

An eastern sun stains white duchesse satin,
Highlights the genteel termination of devotion
With its blood seeping through winter frostwork.

Twelve years ago, I fastened a shadow box
To a wall in our suite in the Hotel La Giocanda.
You caught for its display, from our Florentine window,
The vestigial profile of Lorenzo de Medici.
Preservation of a modest sort.

I have stripped the marquissette
From our irreparable demise.
I could not see everything,
But did spy what further separates
The difficulties in extracting gold
From the inner chambers of your heart.

3. Comment Ça Va?

Well Jenny's got tall grass drowned in monsoon rains
In place of where her heart once grew.
She sold her long-lost uncle to a circus in 'Frisco,
After he stuck her to a night sky with a wing screw,
And parted a dead mare's mane.

Jenny once declared to Bedouin Chief:
*"People are delightful
When they keep their mouths shut
When they stay at home*

When they go to sleep.

*"People are delightful
On a Sunday afternoon
When the stores on Main Street close."*

4. Dead Man's Switch

All men should die while mowing the lawn.
It's the only way to go, Joe.
*There are no new songs for the living
There are no good songs for the dead
These mothers aren't all that forgiving
And the air is filled with lead.*

Aloysius saw his older visage in a hospital recovery room,
Soothed out of slumber by an old tart,
Jukebox recording his oxygen,
Guy Lombardo recording his final hour.

His younger self jumped out from the window curtain,
Ran out of the room and down the hallway,
Crying for his mother lost to car engine fumes.

Life is a slow waltz with the foreseeable.
Death taps your shoulder and steals your dancing partner.
Go shove off like a good stooge, Joe; fall asleep on freshly mown grass.

River

In memory of Anne Marbury Hutchinson and her Indian Motorcycle Touring Club

Songwriter's Confession:

Here's a song posing loosely as a vaudeville drama that fell off the back of a truck. Retrieving it from the side of the road, I came to find that it had nothing to do with trucks or falling out of one but had everything to do with a girl by the name of River.

Prelude.

A primary student's
attempt at haiku:

I crashed a gong,
its oriental laughter
dying deep inside the air.
--Another accidental sound
found crying in a basket
where the river sings low.

And this (better?) one,
written by his brother
while at boarding school:

A snowflake rests
upon a market scale.
A humming bird
defends its empty nest.

Act I.

River kept a razor in the hem of her stocking
to fend of gangs of highway men
and men of the cloth.
Slept beneath the stars and broken store shop neon.
A Karner Blue of lupine hue burnt brown by fire.

Poppies are for falling
into when dreaming.
Man in the park wears
an old world grin.
Denim's for fighting.
Cotton's for writhing
from stitches holding back
the roaring tide of goodbye.

(refrain of last two lines)

Says River to the world at large:
 You whipped my hide.
 You broke my stride.
 I heard the ocean's cheerless tide
 and came to be like withered lemon grass
 in mourning.
 Seasoned sailors heed the red cloud's
 thunderous warning.

Maybe I'll feed horses
 weighed down with heaven's bells
 and drink fresh drops of sweat cupped
 in your hand.

The jar at the spring is broken.
 The widow is forsaken.
 Glad tidings have departed from this land.

Lady Bug Superlative is laughing in the breeze,
 and drinking in the company of grackles in the trees.
 Ravel can drive my ambulance.
 Ravel can fly my plane.
 I am longing for my cradle.
 I am running from my grave.

Said Papa Waddle while River told all within hearing distance what she thought of life as a whole, and how here life could be neatly compared to a hole, as in, "a hole in one's heart" (and here we wish to interject that the observer, that being Papa W, was fashionably dressed in his blue serge and seersucker Sunday morning best):

Somewhere between sunrise and sunset
 There's a cormorant and compass.
 One feeds you while the other
 pricks North with a shiny pin.
 Clavichord's crescendo crashes down.³
 Diminuendo takes a seat and falls asleep
 while nervous strings come gather round.
 You play a phrase, then here the next, you read more notes

³ The real life application of which can quickly provide several thousand tooth picks, which, following a quarterly company luncheon, would be most welcome.

and lose the rest. A situation surely vexed, says the captain
to the shore-tied longshoreman.

All of which to say, in my stately sort of way,
is that you, dear River, are a self-proud little pirate.

You are:

Short on morals,
long in tooth.

One prays to God you daren't reproduce!

Dressed for sinning.

Devil's truce.

Drunken incantations in praise of Zeus!

And your long-lost, wind-tossed lover
lies beneath a pagan tree.

When you're both cut short at the legs
it shall beg to be answered:

Can anyone disagree

that the life of a banshee is most

perilous, often times disastrous,

unabashedly foul-mouthed

and shrilly, unskillfully strange?

At which point River chose for herself a sharp piece of brick, and, chasing the round
buffoon down the public street, declared this manifesto against what she would later
describe as the Improprieties of Fat Tuesday (*Tract N^o 106, all rights reserved*):

Papa Waddle!

Wag-mouthed, superfluous,

Loyalist twaddle!

To grow peace

one has to sow peace.

To gain peace one has to put

One's hatred to rest,

lay one's anger on mother's breast.

Drop your arms of senseless, heartless,

ceaseless insurrection and skip the dratted rest!

--Here we find Papa Waddle finding it most advantageous to make escape on a traveling
calliope.

Act II.

River exits the scene and reemerges as the curtain rises over a little country cottage scene where she reveals to her sister Dolores:

Some self-important pettifogger
 tried hard to dissuade me from the
 true path I'd made for myself.
 Took my papers and possessions!
 Started up an inquisition and a raid!
 I didn't catch the final score. The tears
 of heaven fell no more. There remained
 no comp'ny sure, save a broken hourglass,
 a paper advising one to vote, and terra cotta children
 sitting sadly in the wettest spot of shade.

Chorus:

And terra cotta children sitting sadly, etc.

Says River, facing the audience, and the world at large:

You whipped my hide.
 You broke my stride.
 I heard the ocean's cheerless tide
 and came to be like withered lemon grass
 in mourning.
 Seasoned sailors heed the red cloud's
 thunderous warning.

Maybe I'll feed horses
 weighed down with heaven's bells
 and drink fresh drops of sweat cupped
 in your hand.

The jar at the spring is broken.
 The widow is forsaken.
 Glad tidings have departed from this land.

Lady Bug Superlative is laughing in the breeze,
 and drinking in the company of grackles in the trees.
 Ravel can drive my ambulance.
 Ravel can fly my plane.
 I am longing for my cradle.
 I am running from my grave.



Disco Fries/Poutine Amalgam:

Pieces Relating to Northern New England and Atlantic Canada and to Various Inhabitants Thereof.

Crossing Point*

Snakes
eat the rats
that eat the ties
on the track.

Seven nights ago
some boys from town
stole the crossing gate.

It was there for the taking. For the line lies forgotten
and the freight train's gone.

Jeff Was Here

And underneath this iron trellis
(which holds a string of iron cars
at scheduled times of day--the times
worn into broken ties)
we pass beneath
in an automobile dismissed
by the well-endowed.

The mountains we circle
are indifferent to social customs
to which we are bound
from the dawn of day we first touch
this wandering road
to that chartered dusk inevitable.
We fall in the dust of our fathers.

* Published in *Log Cabin Chronicles*

Our dust tastes theirs,
and theirs, ours.

The trellis does tell us
that JEFF WAS HERE,
and we have dutifully followed.

To Olga*

This is a Waltham gold fob watch,
heirloom from your paternal grandmother, pawned
innumerable times by her contemptible husband
to compensate for income lost
to three day drunks. It bears, inside,
this inscription:
To Olga, Oct 12, 1916,
as well as several rows of rudely etched numbers,
one scrawl for each time it was pawned.
Incompetents from subsequent generations
pawned it, then reclaimed it--
a talisman for inherited failings.

* Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle*, *Log Cabin Chronicles*, *Adagio Verse Quarterly* and *Down in the Dirt*

Radiator Tales

Not that you'd remember--this was long before you came into the picture
(some eight years before your birth) and eight hundred miles north of here.

We were two big goofs (myself and your uncle) welding and chrome-plating bits of Harley/Honda anomaly into totemic form, the base of which we pitched six feet into the oil-soaked earth. Within the base, teepee fashion, was our hideaway, where we espoused visions of a poor man's Apocalypse, where the millionaires would be the first to go, and then the higher ups at the salt plant, and every surviving mother and child would receive a chicken and a red Camaro. Then winter came, we dreamed less, and our totem collapsed under the weight of snow. Heavy rains joined the snow and left our pile in a frozen sea. We hitched a ride into town and filled two spaces at the salt plant, slept nights in a one-room apartment.

At midnight the radiator came to life, telling via Morse code that
the totem was still out there, all rubble and rust but undefeated, awaiting through slumber the glacier's demise.

Disquiet

When pipe smoke curls
'round the grizzled horizon
and the grasslands grow
upon a spinster's back
there's a ragman's shed
that foams and bristles
like a heated beast
whose captor chafes its heart.

format d'essai/prix d'essai*

The sun bleaches
peeling paint of white
on a cement building
for laundry. Windows,
tall and narrow, checked
with blue bubbles, reflect some
of the light and drown the
rest in blue waters.
The building's on a corner.
The sun shines on one half

*† Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle* and *Adagio Verse Quarterly*

while forgetting the other.

November Grass[†]

By the feral river bank
 rose shrubs with thorny stems
 coalesce with November grass.

Catbirds call
 after field mice.

Pin cherry trees
 clothed with Bengal-red leaves
 haunt the hole
 in which the farmhouse fell.

There remains nowhere to dwell
 save under the stars
 by the vagabond's fire.

Spec(tacle)s^{-*}

Through polished circles of clear glass
 held primly in place with gold frames
 you can see your summer house
 and a dirt path wander
 from its door to your feet.

The Clearing[†]

Seized by the shutter of your mind's eye:
 You and I--
 costumed in bed sheets--
 run
 (poorly disguised)
 past the summer people's sign
 inscribed
 DO NOT ENTER.

^{**†} Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkemail Oracle*

Burnt spruce trees haunt the clay road.
 We dodge their condescending glances
 and travel uphill
 to a place familiar

Let's circle in silence again
 three times
 around the rose-colored farmhouse,
 courting shuttered windows
 left longing
 to follow.

Half-Past-Eight[†]

By half-past-eight
 the night's come.
 Having fathered all poems,
 I sleep.

Elegy, Early Autumn⁴

I'm headed up to the Great White North
 To slap some paint on the locksmith's house
 Out on Rhubarb Farm, where the Northern Lights
 Tease the tar out of hungry coyotes.

I left the memory of my first born there,
 In the bedroom with the crooked eaves,
 Where a dirty bib lies in a cold, dark crib,
 Locked out from critical eyes.

There was a life here, many lives,
 None large enough to silence a world full of din,
 None rich enough to move ahead and keep assail,
 None firm enough to tough it out and settle in.

I'm headed up to the Great White North
 To pry boards from covered windows.

⁴ Published in *The Penwood Review*

L. Niello

Dominus illuminatio mea, et salus mea, quem timebo?
-- Vulgate, Psalm 26:1

Preface:

Crabwise, Beowulf drags the dregs of Grendel's stomach. There, he finds the meat of the matter--pinbone, thurl, withers and rump.

Scene from a Short Subject with a Quasi-educational Bent, in Keeping with Provincial Law, Curiously Entitled "*Kyte of all Kith and Kin*"

Blake (speaking to his pen, which, for economy's sake, doubles as his muse):

Until recently, I did not appreciate that the purr of a spring-wound movie camera could permeate your dreams, or that a girl's lingering scent in a sad song could permeate your dreams, or that legends and cautionary tales swapped over coffee poured from countless carafes could permeate, saturate, and eviscerate your seemingly impermeable, intangible dreams.

There is a recurrent pattern in tales spun with dream spools in the warp and weft of your mind's loom. Longing and vengeance fall as trimmed threads to the weaver's floor. They are swept up and tossed into the wind.

Muse (whispering):

You forgot to speak of moon shells and orangeade, the chorus cry of angels, all of which shake one from the stink and worry of now. You forgot this inscription from a mausoleum in New Orleans: *As long as there are dreamers, one can't snuff dreams.*

A Story (Contemporary)

Nicker/Ag

Some black-suited stranger with glossy hair and dark shades in a long black car that resembled the face of a hungry raptor rolled down his window and told me that his firm had the power to steamroll my wife and baby and me. I told the stranger to jump in the river. The stranger, after looking at the river for some time, announced that it wasn't deep enough. Then he coughed some black charcoal dust into my eyes so that I could only see rolling clouds and the sun constantly rising and setting from one end of the horizon to the other. Then the stranger called out my name, and I came crashing down from the rolling clouds and fell onto the sharp peak of the mountain that stands behind our house. I felt the stranger's hand guide me down from the mountaintop, and at the base of the mountain he made me promise that I would give the first of everything I earned to his firm. Then he pulled out in his long black car onto the dirt road and drove away and disappeared around the side of the mountain. That was the day that my firstborn spoke his first word. He called the stranger *Williman*, because he had come to us and left us like a great wind.

The Original Account
Bottle/Cu

A certain stranger with polished mane under silk covering and over eyes burning from grey pits lay snake-like within a long chariot. Both stranger and chariot were twinned, for they caged their snarling anger inside lean, night-colored husks. The stranger told me that his father would soon release his favorite magpie who would steal the food of my wife and cause my baby to sleep forever. I told the stranger to drown his fire in the lagoon. The stranger blew into the air a night shadow from the heart of smoldering embers. I swam into hiding between one cloud and its mother and came to rest inside the thunder of the storm. The stranger closed his mouth and clapped his hands, causing me to fall upon the blade of a high mountain. Who was this stranger, black as death in the wildwood?

A Parallel Account from Another Family
Carpet/Pb

The coat and its master are of sky without the north star, without lamp light dancing from a sea of village windows, the thick black coat writhing about its master.

Regarding coal, this is secret.

Regarding the wolf, he is hated here.

A shepherd breathes dark, foreboding words.

The shepherd's sinewy cheeks clothe stumps of teeth like rotten clapboards which shelter the miller's wheel. The old stone grinds out hungry interior hymns and weary rhythms while eyes glisten like spinning knives, all moving and grinding and singing in cycles unstopped and more chaotic. Sleep spills its sulfuric drink upon the shepherd, giving him dreams of braided cloth with numbers of flocks and memories of blood. The shepherd finds and strikes down the wolf three times, one time for each lost sheep, for each dead son and kinswoman. He cuts the tongue free from the wolf's laughing mouth, while the tongue sings of the lake that spills from the kinswoman's hidden vessel. The tongue sings to the shepherd, "This was this, and this is."

Epilogue

Harped Sonny Boy and Sonny Boy: "Don't slave for the knave with his dull-edged sword. Don't tie yourself down with vine, braid, or cord. Don't fall in the grip of the sentry who groans, "Hope's a tear-soaked piñata chock-full-o'-stones.'"

II. Achy Child

I'm an achy child
at the end of the
earth.

Doesn't matter
if I pick
oranges (sunkist)
from the top of the billboard
(it's
largely immaterial)
but,
what the world
drops,
I wait for,
hat in hand.

III. A'TUGWAQAN¹

Chapter One

Jacquard Sark Synclavier, AKA ‘the Customs Man’, locked the door to his forensic accounting office, then drilled two 3” screws through top and bottom of the door, joining it to the door frame. In the hallway stood a Grapette soda² vending machine. Jacquard managed to unplug the machine from the wall, then bumbled a two step with the armored knight eight feet back to his office door. The door to what had originally been the janitor’s closet was shorter than that belonging to a conventional office. The Grapette machine completely masked the door. Jacquard reconsidered. He pulled the Grapette machine forward and slipped inside his office to grab an extension cord. In short order the Grapette machine was humming and aglow, appearing by any grounds to stand in its rightful locale.

Jacquard had struck a deal with the Grapette machine some weeks prior, having concluded that the machine was an elaborate mask for Chinese emperor Wan-Li. Not unlike other historical figures of note, Jacquard theorized, Wan-Li had joined shoulders with author JD Salinger, former chess champion Bobby Fischer, and ukulele master Tiny Tim in assuming an inconspicuous existence amongst working class Americans. The vending machine ploy, however, was a milestone in original aliases. Jacquard had offered to maintain Wan-Li’s secret identity in exchange for blocking entry to his office. Jacquard was through with the forensic accounting business.

Jacquard offered some words of encouragement to his weighty friend, dropped in two quarters, grabbed a soda, then descended the stairwell of the Connecticut River Business Complex³ in his plastic raincoat, chanting the word ‘think’ in a different language for each step taken. His scuffed dance shoes jangled rhythmic impetus to his recitation of that multilingual list painted on his red silk tie.

¹ Pronounced *aa·du·gva·hgên*. from the Listuguj dialect of the Mi’kmaq tongue. Means *tale* or *story*.

² Manufactured in 1954 by Bimini-Leo Industries, N-18 series

³One of the smaller factories in Carlmento, New Hampshire. Recently converted into professional work space. Formerly the New Hampshire branch of the Cordwainer Deluxe International Shoe Company. Local historians concede that few sources document the factory’s history, its few references printed in electric railcar schedules and local obituaries of retired employees.

Chapter Two

Private Song

Darkest black,
 Whitest gold.
 These are the colors
 That the cool dusk sings.
 At the mouth of a forgotten harbor,
 Sun bleeds gold along the water.
 Trees by a sand-covered shore
 Are painted black.
 Yes,
 Once more the cool dusk sings.
 No one sings with it. It is a private song.

“**S**he...was so handsome,” warbled contributing sports writer “Sidewheel”

Blanchard, finger-punching his column in caps on the world’s last Underwood manual typewriter. The red-beaked travesty came complete with straw fedora.

Jacquard had procured for himself a job as a newspaper reporter for a daily called the Ridsnow Register (*‘covers the Valley like the clouds’*) on the Vermont side of the Connecticut River, reporting on small claims court and nursing home activities and the occasional celebrity touring the nostalgia circuit. Most celebrities graciously contributed biographies, press releases, and black and white glossies.

Jacquard sat at his workstation in a room with other rumped washouts, keyboarding the opening words,

The Trung Sisters--that esteemed, two-time Grammy winning duo--return to Ridsnow for a night full of memories and will sing their beloved hits this Sunday evening at the John Fitch Memorial Senior High School.

This was followed some days later by a hashed meat variation of the earlier material. If a slower-than-usual news week ensued, then the hash hit the fryer one more time and was served up under the headline “**LOCALS STILL TALKING ABOUT TRUNG SISTERS CONCERT.**” His editor complimented him on his frugality.

Jacquard was comfortable working at a slug's crawl. To his way of thinking, this certainly beat scouring columns of fudged numbers in company log books.

"She...was so handsome."

While padding a rural newspaper with further assurances that anything of significance seldom took place within a fifty mile radius, and most certainly not ever in Ridsnow, Jacquard worked on a series of interviews with an old acquaintance, whom he had recently discovered in the charity wing of the Nosrich Obsequies Senior Complex. He'd been covering a tri-state balloon toss tournament at the time, as the complex was hosting the games, and Jacquard wanted to get a scoop on two staff members who were purportedly running high-stake bets under the table.

In better times, said the acquaintance, he had been called "Custer" by his colleagues. Custer liked to tell how he gone to Vietnam as an AP war correspondent on eighteen separate occasions, crawling through jungles and underground cities with a duct-taped gang of Nikon cameras slung around his neck. Born to a Mi'kmaq mother on a Nova Scotia reserve, the nickname Custer didn't wash well with him, but he succumbed to it after discovering in that slimy oyster an exquisite pearl: He had returned to the Viet Cong a half dozen times. Some of his rivals wondered when he would "take his last stand". He decided to fight back by prolonging their frustration. Each assignment yielded a dozen photos and an article with the bi-line, "IHS Custer, AP war correspondent." So the story went.

Jacquard recorded thirteen 90-minute length microcassettes, which he filed alphanumerically in a tea crate small enough to slip inside his trench coat pocket. Don Quixote-like, Jacquard poked at Custer's sensibilities, prejudices, encyclopedic knowledge of hobo survivalist ethics and fractured identity.

"Huey 'copters and M-60's and Alley Cat gun ships reporting for duty, Mr. Chuck, sir!" Custer would sputter. "And Buddy Whatsisname from the 282nd AHC Black Cats smiling as he scoops up troupes and supplies. Must be a vampire. Never shows up on my Tri-X film. Check the supply book. Does Kodak make an emulsion for vampires? Oh, send the little so-and-so to the tunnels of Cu Chi. Make him and five other Little Lord Fauntleroy dress up in pretty school uniforms from the Seaforth Highlanders."

On those occasions when Custer's mind and mouth spun out of control as he relived and reinvented that crumbling framework of helicopters and agent orange, Jacquard didn't intervene. He just came along for the ride. Upon crashing back to earth, the two would seek respite by rolling a malamute-sized aluminum ball down the corridors, rolling and kicking it faster and faster until oncoming nurses and patients were forced to jump out of the way.⁴

Other sessions yielded better results. "Y'know, I've got some Passamaquoddy pals, mostly in Maine, some in New Brunswick. I haven't spoken to my brothers in Rocky Point, Prince Edward Island in years. We call it 'P.E.I.', or just 'the Island'. It's Canada's smallest province.

⁴ The aluminum ball found a new home in a local grade school. Jacquard felt as though they ruled the stars when they kicked their homespun moon without warning into an unsuspecting cosmos.

“My mother, she’s half-Sioux from some performer traveling to Prince Edward Island--where my people live--with a Wild-Bill style rodeo act at the old Charlottetown Forum, and her mother of course was M’ikmaq, and ma married a French newsreel guy from Old Quebec. I got his handle: IHS--sorry, can’t decode it for you.”

There was a nurse’s voice in the background, cut off with the pause button, then sounds of eating and drinking. Jacquard had earlier used the tape to record himself singing a Frankie Valli song in the shower. He could be heard murdering the chorus, where the words are “I love you baby”, dovetailing nicely between the eating and the next reminiscence.

“I’ve been rejected eight ways to France racially and nationally...but bless that old lady Nelly Weeks. She owned blueberry fields in Maine’s Washington County. On my last summer picking, Nelly gave me her dead son’s name and social security card with my last check at the end of the season. The boy’s name was Larry. Some call it a necronym, or a posthumous name, and I guess the Chinese and Vietnamese have a tradition built around them. Took Larry’s name to community college while learning how to shoot commercially. I think later on the feds knew who I was but I used the name Larry in the war before Custer. Call me Larry from the Dead.”

Jacquard converted the best material from these interviews into transcripts which later served as the basis for a four-part series of articles. Shortly after their appearing in print, Custer offered his life’s story from a different angle.

“Päivää,” came Custer’s greeting from a lobby payphone. “I’ve been wanting to level with you. My real name is Elias Lönnrot. I was born in Sammatti, Finland.”

“She...was so handsome.”

“Oh, for the love of Mike,” hissed the resident sports editor. “Someone make that guy shut up.”

Private Shore

All along the way--from private shore to dirt road to our cottage pathway--all along the way the tall trees trembled. We three wore faces of anticipation. Cracked tar and milkweed and broken chutes of rhubarb--all along the way the tall trees trembled. Trees stood almost seven stories high. We three sang a song of anticipation. Black smoke effused from the chimney tops--neighbor's horse broke free from its tether--rising song of anticipation--all along the way the tall trees trembled. Clatter of horse hooves as clouds covered sky--cracked tar and milkweed and broken chutes of rhubarb--tides crashed against a boatless shore. Cry of thunder! We three jumped deep into the tall grass, lying hidden from the road. Shards of lightening! Trees almost seven stories high swayed loose from their roots and fell dead to the ground and into the water. Tides crashed and claimed the dead trees--song sung low with the taste of rain--horse hooves clattered in the far-off distance. All along the way--from private shore to dirt road to our cottage pathway--all along the way the tall trees trembled.

V. Lermontov's Dog

1.

and before the planet gave way to
multitudinous vulgarities,
leona, the wry- lipped tree in black gown
wrapped one arm
around her slim waist while holding a whiskey soda
with her free hand--in the other room,
josephine sat under a small pool of tungsten light,
committing various ironies rendered in black
ink on clear cells to film,
one painful frame at a time.
the government paid her well enough.

why must you speak of them
 mythologize
 revel in unraveled
 raiments of conquest-- please!
 who conquered
 whom?

why
do those worthless
slanderers hold
you still

2.

i do not think this dream of mine was fair.
there was much to be done at a young age.
i moved south of the border with a new bride
and misplaced expectations. five dollars,
a word with peers, and a stolen palette
of vermilion oils--these were good enough,
and better than promises of high wages
and health insurance. you see,
these mothers of the new world drive
rusted out pontiacs and smoke thin cigars
and drive their children
(hungry mouths open in supplication)
to cliff's edge at the end of the junk yard.
it was never bad as this up north. then again,
if conditioned to the pauper's way's
the romantic lies of then
are a sleeping serpent in a mink stole.

carol
your one note
karaoke
in the shower.
to the luffa
you are deus

come now,
before the cold comes
and the darkness

3.

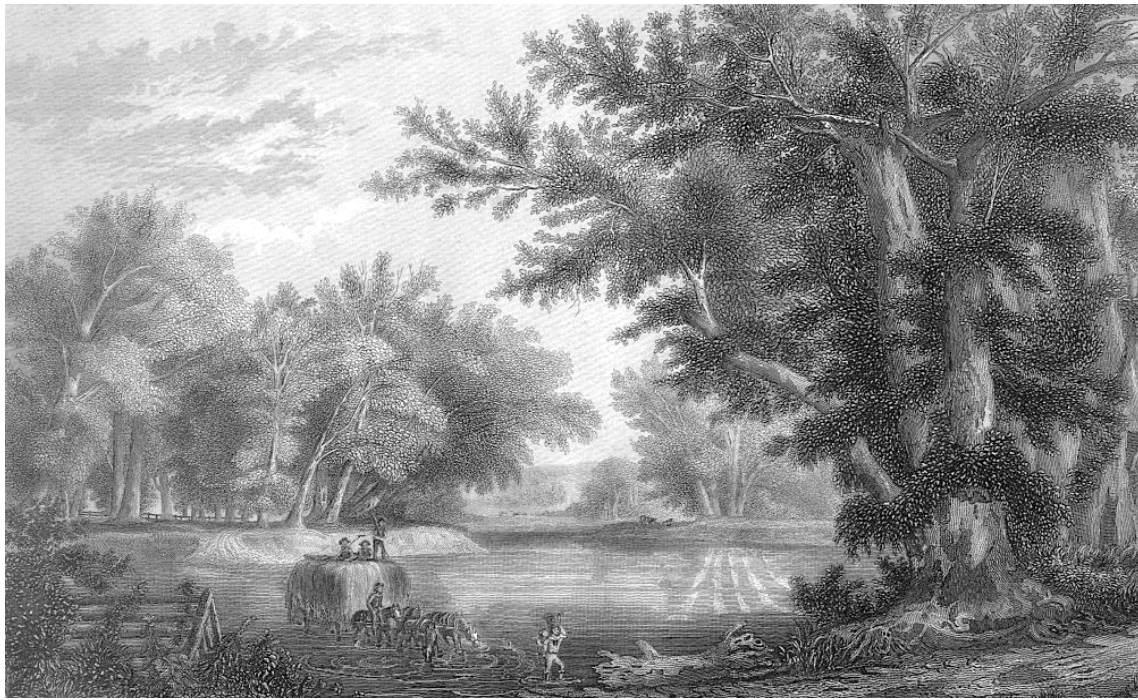
and there sits josephine, still, animating one
wry joke at a time, and there stands leona,
lips whiter than before. the pose
begins to age one, the futility begins to slow
one down. massage those tired muscles of ours
with a new game. let the bright winner prosper.

warm me,
 maimed king,
 while we are both
 here

VI. 'Now That I've Bought Your Attention [This Met with Laughter and Applause] I'm Afraid You'll have to Endure my Speech'

Ah, sweet, sweet college town, beacon of national culture sitting on the water, founded by a kindly dignitary wishing to serve the needs of the Indians, until he figured out that the white man has a lot more money. Some of the best minds in the country are strolling these lanes, their neurons sparked by high math and finance and politics and sonnets (*such a shame they no longer teach rhetoric*, growls an alumnus in the best Oxonian tone any Vermont native can muster).⁵ The bright-topped leaders of tomorrow stroll from the Green and across the street, impervious to Volvo, Saab, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Bentley inflow moving upstream, downstream, the little bear cubs wading with their new feet while licking their chops at the thought of feasting on common folk found asleep in their private waters. And in a recital hall a copper-colored boy plays grand piano N^o 445--O, sweet, dear, good ol' 445--and I dare say I can't quite recall that tune, only that it seems complete and unadorned and most precious in its thorough lack of contrivance.

⁵ 'Gaze down embankments on a land in fee, The Deans, dry spinsters over family plate, Ring out the English name like coin, Humor the snob and lure the lout.'--Karl Shapiro, *University*



VII. Full Light Wind of Lilac

Standing at the grill in Mama's Hopped Up Diner, Goodenough Faraglioni watched as Lnu'k, his German shepherd, removed white butcher's paper from two double cheeseburgers. The dog sat meekly at one of the back booths. Most customers expressed awe when witnessing this the first time round: It was like a film of an eastern Indian woman following the centuries-old ritual of putting on her sari, only in reverse. Lnu'k had executed this ritual in his own patient, shaman-like way seven days a week between 11:45 AM and 12:10 PM, eastern standard time, for much of his twelve years. It had been reported in the local paper, and then AP'd worldwide. Quiet dignity of even the simplest kind, it seems, invites fascination, admiration, even.

Goodenough's son Tenney ate his cereal sitting across from Lnu'k, scratching his sixteen-year-old face and calculating how many days it would take to grow a beard. He had always wanted one but couldn't quite will his facial hair to progress beyond fuzz. He popped a quarter into the Seeburg Consolette to his left and pressed selection A3, Leonard Cohen's cover of the Lennon/McCartney classic *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*. Goodenough smiled approvingly.

"Kissinger?" he asked. "He could always turn a phrase...."

Goodenough placed deep fried mushrooms into a red-and-white checked carton and placed the carton on a plastic tray. He took an Orange Crush from the soda cooler and took the order over to Tenney and Lnu'k.

"I'm leaving for Siberia on Tuesday," said Goodenough, seating himself.

Tenney nodded.

"That model from the Henry W. Carter catalog is wrapping up a shoot there," Goodenough continued. "Just as soon as I'm done with that small claims thing, I'm going to marry her and smuggle her to Alaska by parcel plane, then bring her back here on the Greyhound."

The "small claims thing" was a suit he had filed against Chauncey Week's Liberated Library for giving him "excessive overdue charges" for a book he had failed to return in three years. His claim was that the book, a Time/Life coffee table compendium of Native American history, was too complex to be read in two week's time, and that it could take him many years to read it "so as to gain sufficient understanding of my Native American heritage." Goodenough was half-Italian, half Irish. In truth the book had gone missing for much of the three years and it had only been recently that he found it half-eaten and covered in dog hair under the steps of his apartment.

Lnu'k had succeeded in fully unwrapping both double cheeseburgers and eyed his prize expectantly.

"The *girl* with kaleidoscope *eyes*," moaned Cohen, as though tasting chocolate for the very first time.

Tenney stole a mushroom from Goodenough.

"I trust you with the grill," Goodenough said. "It's the little things you need to work on. For example, don't order more produce or meat than you actually need. And don't let people dressed in hot colors sit too close to people in cool colors. Try to make them sit at opposite ends of the room. The same applies to fat people and slim people. It affects the taste of the food, and, for that matter, everything else."

Tenney nodded wearily and popped another quarter into the Consolette. The unfortunate thing was that once a person made a selection, the song would be heard from all the other mini jukeboxes at each booth. If one didn't like the selection, two or more minutes of wall-to-wall agony ensued. As things stood, many of the selections steered dangerously from the norm.

Tenney's second selection clearly bore that trait. Called *Swami Origami*, a popular comedy skit from the 60's on a novelty 45 single, The Slazenger Brothers play two nursing home patients who argue over, among many things, reality versus delusions of grandeur, and euphoria versus cynicism. It was marginally humorous.

Bob Slazenger starts by announcing, "I am Pastrami Origami, president of all t'ings."

His brother, Arnold, counters by saying that “you cannot make origami from pastrami.”

Then back to Bob: “I am Pastrami Origami, president of all t’ings. You are my disciple.”

Arnold: “I’m Arnie, your older brother.”

Goodenough had gotten to the point of discussing apartment rules. He was reading from a small composition book entitled “Procedure”.

“You can use the TV, but here’s some suggestions. Use the remote that sits in the center of the coffee table. It is placed there to maximize the centrality of the living room. It also counters evil thoughts from watching Captain Kangaroo.

“You press the ON button and will notice immediately that you are restricted to two channels: NBC and PBS. NBC is the exploitive carney of the networks and PBS is contrarily WASP-ish and needy. Musicals, such as Doris Day in *April in Paris*, come on at midnight. Don’t watch them. Too many midwestern accents ruining good musical numbers with nasal accentuation.

“In the late nineteen forties and early fifties, R’s at the end of words were suddenly pronounced with diabolical passion. When singing, a staccato, conversational quality was applied to lyrics, in place of the operatic vibrato. It’s as though a bunch of guys from Iowa attacked all these snobs with their boarding house accents and took over the country’s media. But the real culprit was a film star of the day. Her name was Virginia O’Brien. She sang *Life Upon The Wicked Stage* in the 1946 musical *Till The Clouds Roll By* in her gimicky style--frozen face, deadpan delivery--and she influenced a lot of singers right up to Nancy Sinatra and her hit song, *These Boots Were Made For Walkin’*. I think she influenced Bob Dylan more than Woody Guthrie did, personally.

“Anyways, this was just one of many postwar fads, like adolescent girls wearing bobby socks and cheap Blue Waltz perfume. I suggest you read William Labov’s *Principles of Linguistic Change*—there’s two volumes-- to get a better idea of what’s been going on. Or Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*. The rabbit ears on the top of the monitor are eye-candy only. They serve as a foil to government surveillance. When I worked at a machine shop I used to wear a colander on my head for the same purpose. But I was the old man of the shop, so no one gave me problems.”

“You could give me the book,” suggested Tenney. “I could look it over.”

Goodenough shook his head.

“That would be cheating.”

“I am Pastrami Origami. I am all knowing. I am older than time.”

“You are my baby brother, Bob Slazenger. I taught you everything you know.”

“I am from space,” said Bob with unshakable certainty. “I travel faster than the speed of time.”

“Your wheelchair goes two miles per hour,” Arnold shot back. “Tops!”

Audience laughter could be heard. It had been recorded live.

“If you lose power in the event of a national emergency,” Goodenough continued, “use the flashlight and radio combo in the closet. It winds up. No batteries. Separate your compost from your recyclables, and treat your colon with respect. I won’t elaborate, but grapes are a natural cleanser.”

He looked at Lnu'k for some assistance. Lnu'k had eaten both double cheese burgers, leaving two pieces of butcher's paper folded into standing cranes. The dog smiled as only truly self-possessed souls can.

"You are an unseemly disciple. Kiss my shoe. Just make with the kiss. It makes me happy."

"I bought that shoe. I bought the pair at Woolworth's for nine-fifty."

"When you kiss my shoe you will know all t'ings."

"When I kiss your shoe," concluded Arnold Slazenger, "I'll be dead." 

VIII. Prima Facie: Nocturne for Disassembled Ukulele and Rickshaw

Were I not a celluloid messenger;
 Were I not Nosferatu,
 Feasting on his own
 Nitrate flesh;
 Were I not a failed study
 In Appalachian sunshine,
 Broadsided in broad daylight
 By a San Franciscan streetcar
 (Downtime: one hour);
 I would flood you (no warning)
 With my tidal bore.
 I would bore you with pressed flowers
 And polecat tears.

Tonight the sky is gauze and airplane exhaust
Dispersed against flood lamp searches of diamenté
 The sky is coccus scarlet,
 Cedarwood and hyssop,
 And blood from the throat of a young, red cow
 Thrown and sprinkled over
 Burning, northern lights.

Please find enclosed a handwritten specimen
 Of an account written by an unconscious patient
 Detained in a military hospital
 While stationed in occupied Japan.
 He mentions several men crucial to the war's end,
 His mother,
 And his love for tapioca.
 He also composed a poem,
 Written in Esperanto,
 That serves doubly as an address
 To the United Nations.
 It speaks uncharitably about war, nationalism,
 And about one cow seen devouring another.

The doctor and nurse check the patient's vitals.
 His mother enters (stage left) and places a bouquet of black
 Roses on the side table. The sound of distant canons and artillery are heard offstage.
 Outside the theatre, a white dove (Picasso says it's a pigeon), painted with talcum and
 Paste, falls off the roof top
 And dies.

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Just Add Water*
Dedicated to Auro d'Alba,
and you fine, modern charlatans.

Mama is an armada
 of Technicolor dreams,
 bravely crossing reality's ocean,
 cutting through the white foam
 of arpeggio waves.

Kodachrome transparency
 mounted in aluminum.

At 12 o'clock, a window
 with a handwritten note
 which reads:

202. Our first home,
summer 1952.

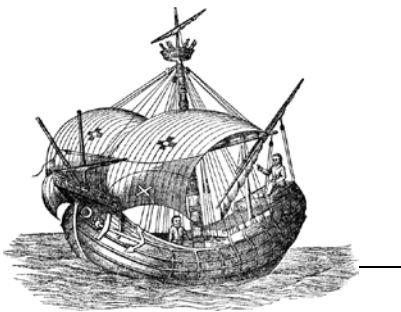
Mama stands in the front yard
 in an orange taffeta bride's maid's
 gown, its bold style characterized
 by whorls, curves, and an appearance

* Published in *Deep Cleveland Junkmail Oracle*

of Jell-O powdered scallops
in a multi-tiered musicale,
a DNA spiral of
Betty Crocker/Dinah Shore/Lucky Strike
prodigality, her lips
molded into a Victory Red,
non-stick smile
for the observer's Brownie.

Behind her, a dogwood tree
blooms against flawless sky,
cotton ball clouds caught in passing.

Mama is an armada
of Technicolor dreams,
bravely crossing reality's ocean,
cutting through the white foam
of arpeggio waves.



π

The Great Tabulating Machine died one day

leaving me to fend for myself

I had no reason to fear

(selah)

I just turned the big box upside down

grabbed a mallet

made a hole

scooped out its brains

like pumpkin pulp

and strawberry ice-cream

stuck in some soil

and a bonsai tree.

Peace has returned

to this place, although

I can't make a pie chart

to prove it so.

The man tipped his hat,
 flashed a counterfeit smile,
 and addressed the lady of the house:

I'm a wandering dentist

(hawker of plumpers).

I fill mouths with balls of ivory

(and Tuscarora rice).

There's a game of hippos

and ninepins

in many a mouth,

and while you watch the gambling

Ninepins tumble

down, ↴

I offer the next style

up. ↱

Ownership. I take camera drink it freely
in bus passing highway cemetery.

10 statues of dead with
fall foliage shot while zooming 80 mph.

My face caught mirroring.

Advance film to next frame.

Fly.

Papa Harlequin Frog placed his dreams

in my palm, then folded my hand into a fist.

He joined the circus and

became a sideshow contortionist.

Papa wipes his boots with his face
for shrieks of horror from mud-faced children,
spit and sawdust and cotton candy.

He sends his lonesomeness home
in a box for laundering.

Tatters alls
Guildhall
Shop, stall, booth,
Open market

Conversion
Reduction
Transmutation
Transformation
Development

The department clerk jobbernowl, pushing turd ball parcels of Fiestaware, Tupperware, Lego and Megablok underneath pea-green rain cover while working in synchronized death song, yea, together they greet one another in solemn assembly to push and roll balls of plastic excrement through jungles of lingerie, buzzing flies and bagged pemmican jerky, stopping instinctively at strategic points to build beetling mounds and mark them with garish symbols.

Here comes that
 Somnambulistic tatterdemalion
 the prodigal 11th wise man
 fathered by Basho
 he pilots his own steamboat
 leaves his captain
 in the arms of
 shoreline branches
 the pilot lives and remarks,
 unchecked, rolls his own trail
 through

the troposphere, where one will often hear staccato barks and low growls in dog Latin. At nightfall, new members emerge from the mouth of the jungle and congregate in a dimly lit sanctuary buttressed by wooden booths littered with steel shells cupping honeydew and cacao beans. Blue vested weevils defer to orange hunters.

The pilot as queen instructs them to eat in haste for tonight's labors shall pass under the uncompromising scrutiny of this queen of all tribes

The three boys have slipped into dusk's wound.

The three boys have slid into obscurity.

They have turned the screw of the caricamenti.

They are bound together by imitation guitars, Nehru jackets⁵,
and your social security number, which appears on your card.

It is yours alone. The song that they sing was written by the
Tsunami 3. They sing for 1/8 the price on the Mock-O-Gram label and in this city they are justly renowned.⁶

The three boys are indistinguishable. The three boys celebrate zaniness in B-sides of critical propinquity.
him, and before he got in his car and left them and Augustus Street behind.

⁵ Author: Imagine that some kid got a job in a department store, bought a suit and guitar with his first paycheck and started rehearsing with some buddies. Would he come out the other end of the store as a guy with the next great band?

DP: Why not... stranger things have happened.... but the suit will lessen his odds.
--excerpt from interview with Dick Peterson of the Kingsmen. (II/III/MMVII)

⁶ "We always went to reel to reel first, so I could [cut] 78's one at a time as folks ordered them."

--Joe Bussard, 78 collector, founder of Fonotone Records, in correspondence with the author. (VIII/X/MMVII)

Said Tiffany to some carnival glass:

I'm all for cooperation
between the arts and the trades,
between the painting smocks and the blue collars.
I'm glad you nailed the floor slats in place
so I can have a stage to sing from
so that the folks in the back row
will have some slats to stomp on
so that the piano man won't
take a long trip to where downtown
gives China a sidewalk kiss.⁷
I mean,
when you think about it,
both you and the piano man
spend most of your hired time
swinging a hammer or two.

⁷ 'Sidewalk kiss': Slang, meaning 'what occurs when a person's open mouth is kicked into a curb'. Atlantic Canadian term, indigenous to Tignish, PE

I-8

at the tramp house;
was given breakfast
and supper, and
an armful of wood for my fire.
No lock was kept on the cell door--
no treatise on decency,
no provocation--
just some welcome provisions
between freight cars,
dogs.

4/2H

Ticonderoga—
land between two waters(the goodand the bad).
As for the Ball lightning which chars earth's memory
and
that reckoning in possession of good water:
Grasp the book's line that clearly speaks of you,
then write.

Peste Nera

Sixteen milimeter scoop-a-tunes. Abandoned store. On the Colorama screen: Jerry Murad torches the airwaves with his harmonica while a lady named Sacculina rises from behind her cocktail drum kit and grabs the mustachioed Harmonicat by his necktie. Sacculina leads him by the hand through an open window. Jerry falls off the earth while the beautiful lady drummer paddles a crescent moon like a gondola. Then a singer known simply as Antoine sings “Tous les enfants du monde” in a flowery shirt and a long mop of hair. Antoine sings to a dazed eagle while watching a residential building fall down into a ball of dust. His psychedelic convoy enchants various zoo animals. Then a pale complexioned singer named Heino* sings “Karumba, Karacho, ein Whiskey” in a tavern full of dancing Germans. Then nothing. There’s broken glass, fire burning under piles of ceiling tile, a crying infant. Your last meal was two days ago—a ham sandwich and two beers. You’ve just spent your last seventy-five cents.

* “HEINO was/is... Arien Super Sentiment Drag with sunglasses, in/out of tune handkerchief hero, TV dinner cook serving German backyard sentiment. When Heino is on, dumb blonds run run run. Some students played Heino songs on their ghettoblasters as the ultimate provocative...as blast to the intellect, as gun to your head, ...lethal weapon, doomsday sound. Will that do it?”

--Artist Waldo Bien, Founding Director of the Free International University World Art Collection, in conversation with the author, MMVII

9

HENCHMEN JEER BROWN HYENA
OR
SHINING STEEL TEMPERED IN THE FIRE

Published in *Zone*, *Temenos*, and *~(the poetry)Worm~* (№39)

Wrote the only literate bobbin boy from #7 room:

“Dear Mr. Henry Quackenbush, Factory Overseer:

I’m leaving this note to inform you

that the loom fixer, the sample weaver,

the mill right and the finish percher

have gone home.

“We have stripped your bobbins,

cleaned off your looms,

swept your floors,

turned off your boilers

and overhead lights,

padlocked your file drawers and cabinets,

boarded your windows and barred your doors.

“We have spread storage cloths over

your mill housing furniture,

torn the final page

from the company calendar.

“We have blotted our names

from the final census

of the United States.

“We’re boarding a fast train

fueled with mummies from antiquity,

and are heading home to

Quebec, County Clare

and the tribe of Reuben.

“Our attorney, Mr. Moyse,

shall plague you by requesting

an independent audit on your heart.”

Thought the old overseer,

pulling at his stiff collar

while reading this note,

“My last sol has passed through my hands!

May the spent purple dyes from the dye house

pour down

into the mighty river of water of life

and poison their last fish.

I'll spend my days weaving baskets

while imbibing Rod McKuen

in paperback,

Schlitz beer on ice and Perry Como

singin' *Dirty Old Town* with a

western swing,

then have my cracked nut fastened

to the house of Dagon."

Finis

